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Victor



Victor Hugo, aged 20

THE LOVE LETTERS OF VICTOR HUGO

1820-1822

WITH COMMENT BY PAUL MEURICE
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ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS
FACSIMILE LETTER, ETC.



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Illustrations



INTRODUCTION

VICTOR HUGO, in his *Feuilles d'Automne,* speaks thus of these letters:

O mes lettres d'amour, de vertu, de jeunesse,
C'est donc vous! Je m'enivre encore à votre ivresse,
    Je vous lis à genoux.
Souffrez que pour un jour je reprenne votre âge!
Laissez-moi me cacher, moi, l'heureux et le sage,
    Pour pleurer avec vous!

J'avais donc dix-huit ans! J'étais donc plein de songes!
L'espérance en chantant me berçait de mensonge;
    Un astre m'avait lui.
J'étais un dieu pour toi qu'en mon cœur seul je nomme,
J'étais donc cet enfant, hélas, devant qui l'homme
    Rougit presque aujourd'hui.

O temps de rêverie, et de force, et de grâce!
Attendre tous les soirs une robe qui passe!
    Baiser un gant jeté!
Vouloir tout de la vie: amour, puissance, gloire!
Être pur, être fier, être sublime, et croire
    À toute pureté.*

* Letters of early manhood, virtue, love,
Can these be you? Once more let my heart move
    Responsive as I kneel to read you o'er;

And here they are, these "letters of early manhood, virtue, love"—she to whom he wrote them too modestly destroyed her own, but she piously preserved those of her *fiancé*—here they are, chaste but ardent, ingenuous but often grave, sportive in many places and yet full of high thoughts. Here they are, with all their extravagances, their discouragements, their complaints, their bursts of joy, their little scoldings, their caresses, their records of real quarrels followed by delicious reconciliations. They evidently were not written to be seen by other eyes than those of the girl he loved: he constantly entreats her to burn them; they are all the more valuable on that account. We rarely have a chance to see a love like this start fresh from its secret fount in all its spontaneity, so pure, so youthful, so sincere, and so profound.

Victor had known Adèle when they were children. Their two families, the Hugos and the Fouchers,

> For this day let me be your age again,
> Good, happy, as I once was—then, with pain,
> Let me shed tears that I am so no more.
>
> I was eighteen! Such happy dreams had I!
> Hope sang sweet fictions for my lullaby;
> A gleaming star was shining over me!
> *Now* only in my heart I breathe thy name.
> *Then* I was god to thee; but now with shame
> Man recollects the child he used to be.
>
> Lost dreams of power, success, and grace—alas!
> How have I watched until her robe should pass;
> How lavished kisses on her fallen glove!
> *Then* I hoped all from life—love, strength, and fame!
> Ah! to be pure, and to have faith, the same
> In all things pure, as I had then, my love.

had been intimate before their birth. Their children grew up together. They called each other *thee* and *thou.*

Victor Hugo speaks thus of the birth of his young affection :

I see myself again, a child in years, a merry schoolboy, playing, running, shouting, laughing with my brothers in the long green alley in the wild garden of that home in which I passed my early life. We dwelt in the old Nunnery which lifts its head over the dark dome of Val de Grâce.*

He sees himself again: "I was still a boy, but dreamy and full of passion," and beside him is a young girl. He sees her "with her large bright eyes, her abundant locks, her golden-brown complexion, her red lips, and her pink cheeks. . . ."

Our mothers [he says] used to tell us to run and play together. We used to take walks instead. We were told to play, but we preferred to talk. We were children of the same age—not of the same sex. Nevertheless, for a year longer we were merely playfellows; we even had little trials of strength. I took from her once the biggest apple in the orchard; I slapped her when she would not let me have a bird's nest. She began to cry. I said: "All right, then! We will go and tell our mothers. They will tell us both that we were wrong, but in their hearts each mother will think her child was right."

But before long the time came when she walked leaning on my arm, and I was proud and experienced some new emotions. We walked slowly; we spoke softly. She dropped her handkerchief; I picked it up. Our hands touched each other, and trembled. She began to talk

* *Le dernier jour d'un condamné.*

about the little birds, about the star over our heads, about the crimson after-glow of the sunset behind the trees, about her school-mates, her frocks, her ribbons. We talked innocently of commonplace things; yet we both blushed, for the little girl had grown a maiden.

She in her turn tells the same story.

In August, 1818, Mme. Hugo no longer lived at the Feuillantines, as they called the Nunnery. The general said that his half-pay did not permit him to give his wife and boys the luxury of a garden. They moved into a less expensive apartment, on the third story of No. 18 Rue des Petits-Augustins.

After dinner Mme. Hugo always went to pay a visit to her old friend, Mme. Foucher. If her two boys were out of school, they always accompanied her. Almost every evening during the winter of 1818-1819, the porter at the Hôtel de Toulouse* said, he would see Eugène and Victor coming along, arm in arm, in company with their mother, who carried her work-bag in her hand, and wore a purple merino dress, nearly covered by a cashmere shawl with a palm-leaf border.

Mme. Foucher used her bed-chamber as a sitting-room. It was a large room, with a deep alcove. The visitor always found her arm-chair waiting for her at one corner of the hearth, and, without taking off her shawl and bonnet, would sit down in it, take her needle-work out of her bag, and begin sewing. M. Foucher had his place on the other side of the hearth,

* The hôtel of the Conseil de Guerre, Rue Cherche-Midi, where M. Foucher, former secretary of the Council, continued to keep his apartment.

with a stand near him, on which were placed his tobacco-box and a wax candle. Between him and Mme. Hugo, at a long narrow table, Mme. Foucher and her daughter sat at work, and Eugène, Victor, and Victor Foucher made up the circle.

Those evenings, we should think, were very dull ones. The head of the household had been so much broken in health by long nights of insomnia that he did not care for bustle or conversation. He sat apart in his corner with his books. Mme. Foucher, anxious not to disturb him, and by nature very quiet herself, talked but little. Eugène and Victor had been always told by their mother never to speak unless they were spoken to. Mme. Hugo would occasionally interrupt her sewing to open her snuff-box—she took snuff, as well as M. Foucher. She would then offer her box to her old friend, saying, " M. Foucher, won't you take a pinch?" He would say " yes " or " no," and, for the most part, those were the only sentences except " good-day " and " good-night " exchanged between them during the whole evening.

But those monotonous evenings had an especial charm for Victor; what this was even he might at first have found it hard to explain. When dinner was over at home, he was eager to set out for Mme. Foucher's, and hurried Eugène if he were not ready. In the street he was impatient to get there even before his mother. When, by any chance, he could not go to the Hôtel de Toulouse, he was unhappy.

It was not that he enjoyed watching the wood-fire on the hearth, or passing two long hours sitting still on a

badly stuffed chair. He did not care if there was not a word spoken. He was satisfied if M. Foucher did not look up from his book, or if the ladies were intent upon their sewing, for then he could look as long as he liked at Mlle. Adèle.

For some time Victor seemed satisfied by thus contemplating her steadily. It may have been timidity that kept him so, or it may have been because it was very difficult to see Adèle by herself; possibly he did not fully understand what was taking place within him. Young people in those days may have been in want of some little instruction.

We know, from one of the letters written in 1821, the very day, and in what manner, the hearts of these two young people became known to each other. It was on April 26, 1819. Victor was seventeen years old, and Adèle sixteen.

Even when they made to each other the supreme confession, they were mere children playing the game of love, as other young persons at their age play hide-and-seek. It was all very *naïf* — very charming. Adèle, bolder and more curious than Victor (for she was a girl), wanted to find out what was the meaning of his silent admiration. She said: "I am sure you have secrets. Have you not one secret, greater than all?" Victor acknowledged that he had secrets, and that one of them was greater than all the rest. "Just like me!" cried Adèle. "Well, come now, tell me your greatest secret, and I will tell you mine." "My great secret," Victor replied, "is that I love you." "And my great secret is that I love you," said Adèle, like an echo.

The ice was broken. It was no gradual thaw; yet the love of these young people was moderate and under restraint.

From our most innocent lips that day
  Hardly escaped expressions of our love;
One word was all that we had power to say.
. . . .
There was no transport in your love for me,
And mine for you was from all madness free.*

After this letters were occasionally exchanged, but it seems that they were "cold and short." They were not preserved.

The moment drew near when the loving pair were to be for a short time separated.

Winter was nearly over. Mme. Foucher always hired for the summer a little place in the suburbs of Paris—in the *banlieux*. The summer of 1819 she spent at Issy. This going into the country was a great grief to Victor. In vain he tried to prove that Issy was not much farther off than the hôtel of the Conseil de Guerre, that once through Vaugirard, you would be there; but visits could not be paid every day, though often when the weather was fine Mme. Hugo would take the two boys and set out for Issy. On their way she would buy baskets of fruit, which they were delighted to carry. On arriving they handed them over to the servant, who would hasten to set three more places at the breakfast table. When the fruit had been eaten they would go out-doors to enjoy the fresh air in the garden.†

Autumn at last came, and the Foucher family re-

* Raymond d'Ascoli. See *Œuvres de la première jeunesse*.
† Victor Hugo, as related by *Un témoin de sa vie*.

turned to Paris. The fire had been kept alive during their short absence.

Sweet inclination grew a quenchless flame.*

Love had entered into the heart and into the very life of Victor Hugo. Thenceforward it was to be stronger than all else, and it grew more and more resistless day by day.

It was on their return from Issy, during the last months of 1819, that a regular correspondence between Victor and Adèle must have commenced. Victor by this time seems to have grown a less timid lover; he asked and obtained from Adèle appointments to meet in places where they could see each other alone.

In the first place, there was the garden of the Hôtel de Toulouse, where Adèle lived—a beautiful garden, with great trees at the end of it. When her mother was out, Adèle would make her escape from the house, run swiftly down-stairs, and glide along a shady path to meet Victor, who was expecting her, "under the chestnut-trees." Then sometimes in the morning Adèle would go to market in her mother's stead, as was a common practice in those days, when the manners of the *bourgeoisie* were more simple than they are at present, and when charming young girls of that class wore caps like the peasantry. The little housekeeper would make her purchases, and then, not without some scruples of conscience, she would hasten to join Victor in some quiet street where he

* *Odes et Ballades.*

was waiting for her. After a time M. Foucher's health improved. He saw his friends with some enjoyment in the evenings. Adèle's young friends came to visit her with their parents. The guests talked and laughed, and divided into groups or pairs. One of these last was frequently Victor and Adèle; but their furtive talks were necessarily very brief; they had to be supplemented by writing.

We have not the earliest of these letters; they were probably not very different from those preserved. The letters of the boy were doubtless full of passion, while those of the girl were full of anxiety. Their state of mind was not the same.

Victor at seventeen thinks like a man, and he wants his own way like a man. He is sure of himself, he is confident in his own sincerity, confident of his love and of his honorable intentions; nor does he doubt his own courage and constancy. If they *must* wait, he will wait. If obstacles are in their way, he will surmount them. He will not admit that anything can be impossible. He considers Adèle as already his wife, and boldly signs his letters to her, "Your Husband." But Adèle is as yet only a child. With great intelligence and noble sentiments, she has a child's heart. She is quite innocent and tender-hearted. With the ignorance, the wonder, the joy, the fears, and the scruples of a child, she accepts and returns the love he offers her.

And, indeed, as she was a young girl, she was right to be more scrupulous, more alive to the proprieties, than her lover. And to what, we wonder, will this premature love lead these young people at their

age and in their circumstances? On the first discovery of their secret the duty of their parents must be to separate them. For which reason they agreed rarely to speak unless they were alone together, and in the presence of other people to pretend that they were wholly indifferent to each other.

But this pretence was painful to Adèle. Victor's mother, to whom he was as submissive and obedient as a boy of twelve, still looked upon him as a child, and never for one moment imagined that at his age he could be in love. Adèle's mother, more quick-sighted, fancied that she had seen more than one sign of something which, however, she supposed to be mere childishness; but she kept a strict look-out, she asked questions, and reproved her daughter. Poor Adèle, much worried, complained of this to Victor. Sometimes she blamed him, and sometimes she lost her temper. But, in fact, all that the poor child asked was to follow the instincts of her own heart. When Victor fancied that she did not love him, when she saw him despondent, she hastened to ask his forgiveness. He was already, as his verses say, " her god."

His success as a poet, his fame, which was already beginning to shine, was dear to him now as a pledge of success in a literary career. We must not forget that Chateaubriand had called him *l'enfant sublime,* that in Royalist *salons* his ode *Les Destins de la Vendée* and his satire *Le Télégraphe* were spoken of with admiration, and that the Académie des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse had given two of its first prizes to his poem on *Le Rétablissement de la Statue de*

Henri IV., and a beautiful short poem, written when he was sixteen, *Les Vierges de Verdun.*

Since we have none of the letters exchanged by the lovers in the autumn of 1819, the first written testimony we possess of Victor Hugo's love may be found in some verses called *Le Premier Soupir,* dated in December of that year.

Great was the delight of Adèle when the young poet gave her these verses, telling her to read them by herself, for they were verses made for her alone. There was plenty of despair and sadness in the poem. It was an elegy; how could it be otherwise, for every verse spoke of dying. They were sad lines, but oh! how beautiful! And when the poet, foreseeing his death, asks for some little recompense for his devotion, Adèle in her enthusiasm promised the real poet to give him twelve kisses. Twelve was a great many. It appears in the sequel that she only gave him four.

> . . . Ces vers pour qui ton jeune amour
> M'a promis des baisers, que ta prudence craintive
> Me refuse de jour en jour.*

Nevertheless, these verses and these kisses were before long the cause of fresh trouble to Adèle.

We have said that she had some young girls for her friends. Now, when a young person has friends, and has received a copy of beautiful verses, how can it be expected that the poem will not be shown to them, and when showing it, how could she fail to add that she was the maiden beloved by the real poet?

* Raymond d'Ascoli: *Œuvres de la première jeunesse.*

Whereupon she received congratulations from her friends. "But you—do you love him?" "Could I do less?" "Did you ever tell him that you loved him?" "How could I hide it?" And then she owned the price he asked—the promised kisses. With that came exclamations on the part of her dear friends. "How imprudent!" "But this is serious!" "What an opinion he must have of you!" "He cannot respect you, since you do not respect yourself!"

Poor Adèle compared what her friends said with warnings that her mother had given her. "Take care," that lady said. "If a man ever tells you that he loves you, and you are so weak as to respond, it will not be long before he ceases to esteem you."

Oh! could it be because she loved him that she would forfeit his esteem? He must despise her. Yes, it was true, he must despise her—and to be despised by him! Oh! that was terrible! And she asks him with anguish, "Is it true? Can it be possible that you despise me?" In vain he protests, grows indignant, multiplies his vows, brings proofs of his devotion. The frightful doubt has grown into a fixed idea; she reverts to it in their correspondence again and again.

We have not got the letters in which she questions him, but we have his answers. What could he do to convince her? It is not only esteem, not only respect, it is worship that he feels for her. He might almost say that he loves her on his knees. To press her sometimes in his arms, to obtain the promise of her kisses (which he afterwards allows her to refuse

him), is all he dares to claim from her, is all that he calls happiness.

Car l'amant à l'époux garde sa pureté.*

We may be permitted to think that the lover had some merit, for at sixteen, besides her charm of youth, Adèle was singularly lovely. She was a brunette, with abundant black hair and arched eyebrows, large, bright, soft eyes, a straight, delicate nose, and a beautifully formed mouth, with a sweet expression. She was adorably sweet, adorably handsome, and he adored her. He placed her in his thoughts, as it were, upon an altar. His budding genius bowed before her beauty (both were divine gifts) humbly and timidly. Some day she might be his, but he hardly dared to expect it; yet, if she were another man's, he would die—he could not bear it. This idea of death being a proof of love, and also of its being its sanction, dwelt in his imagination, and at the same time it impressed itself on that of the young girl.

Meantime he laid all he had and all he was at her feet—under her feet, it would be more correct to say. Never do his letters speak to her of his writings, of his literary successes, or of his growing celebrity; or, if he makes any allusion to these things, it is only to repeat that all is for her sake; that all is hers; that in all she has inspired him. The letters are solely about love; they speak of nothing but love; and that is why they are, and always will be, so pure and so unique an example of the ideal of love.

* *Marion Delorme.*



Samedi soir.

Quelques mots de toi, mon Adèle chérie, ont encore changé l'état de mon âme. Oui, tu peux tout sur moi, et demain je serais mort que d'ignorer si le doux son de ta voix, la tendre pression de tes lèvres adorées suffirait pour rappeler la vie dans mon corps. Combien ce soir je vais me coucher différent d'hier ! Hier, Adèle, toute ma confiance dans l'avenir m'avait abandonné, je ne croyais plus à ton amour, hier l'heure de ma mort aurait été la bienvenue.... Cependant, me disais-je encore, s'il est vrai qu'elle ne m'aime pas, si rien dans mon âme n'a pu me mériter le bien de son amour sans lequel il n'y a plus de charme dans ma vie, est-ce une raison pour mourir ? est-ce que j'existe pour mon bonheur personnel que j'existe ? Oh non ! tout mon être lui est consacré, même malgré elle.. Et de quel droit aurais-je osé

prétendre à son amour ? Suis-je donc [illegible]
plus qu'un ange ou qu'un dieu ? je l'aime,
il est vrai, moi, je serai prêt à tout lui
sacrifier avec joie, tout, jusqu'à l'espérance
d'être aimé d'elle, il n'y a pas de dévouement
dont je ne serai capable pour elle, pour un
de ses sourires, pour un de ses regards ; mais
est-ce que je pourrai être autrement ? est-ce
qu'elle n'est pas l'unique but de ma vie ?
qu'elle me montre de l'indifférence, de la
haine même, ce sera mon malheur, voilà
tout. Qu'importe, si cela ne nuit pas à sa
félicité ! Oh oui ! si elle ne peut m'aimer, je
n'en dois accuser que moi. mon devoir est de
m'attacher à ses pas, d'environner son exis-
tence de la mienne, de lui servir de rempart
contre les périls, de lui offrir ma tête pour
marche-pied, de me placer sans cesse entre elle et
toutes les douleurs, sans réclamer de salaire,
sans attendre de récompense. trop heureux si elle
daigne quelquefois jeter un regard de pitié sur son

esclave et de souvenir de moi au moment
du danger! Hélas! qu'elle me laisse
jeter ma vie au devant de tous ses dangers, de
braver les supplices, qu'elle me permette de
baiser avec respect la trace adorée de ses pieds,
qu'elle consente à appuyer parfois sa marche
sur moi dans les difficultés de l'existence,
et j'aurai obtenu le seul bonheur auquel
j'aie la présomption d'aspirer. Parce que je suis
prêt à tout lui immoler, est-ce qu'elle me
doit quelque reconnaissance? est-ce sa faute
si je l'aime? faut-il qu'elle se croie pour
cela contrainte de m'aimer? Non, elle pourrait
se jouer de mon dévouement, payer de haine mes
services, repousser mon idolâtrie avec mépris,
sans que j'eusse un moment le droit de me plaindre
de ses rigueurs, sans que je dusse cesser un instant
de lui prodiguer tout ce qu'elle désirerait.
Et quand chacun de mes jours aurait été
marqué par un sacrifice pour elle, le

jour de ma mort je n'aurai encore rien acquitté de la dette infinie de mon être envers toi. — Adieu, à cette heure, mon Adèle bien aimée, c'étaient là les pensées et les résolutions de mon âme. Elles sont encore les mêmes aujourd'hui, seulement il s'y mêle l'enivrement du bonheur, de ce bonheur si grand que je n'y pensais jamais qu'en tremblant de n'oser y croire. — Il ne dépend que de m'aimer, Adèle! dis-moi, est-ce que je puis me fier à cette ravissante idée? Crois que ce n'est que si ce bonheur par hasard m'échappe si jamais je puis couler toute ma vie à tes pieds, sûr de te rendre aussi heureuse que je serai heureux, sûr d'être aussi adoré de toi, que tu es adorée de moi? Oh! ta lettre m'a rendu le repos, tes paroles de ce soir m'ont rempli de bonheur. Sois mille fois remerciée, Adèle, mon ange bien-aimé; je voudrais pouvoir me prosterner devant toi comme devant une divinité. Que tu me rends heureux! Adieu, adieu, je vais passer une bien douce nuit à rêver de toi, dors bien, et laisse ton mari te prendre les

The Love Letters of Victor Hugo

1820

SATURDAY EVENING, *January*, 1820.

A few words from you, my beloved Adèle, have again changed my state of mind. Yes, you can do anything with me; and to-morrow, were I even dead, the sweet tones of your voice, the tender pressure of your lips, would call me back to life again. How differently I shall feel as I go to sleep to-night from what I did last evening! Yesterday, Adèle, all confidence in the future had abandoned me; I no longer believed that you loved me; yesterday the hour of my death would have been welcome to me. And yet I said to myself: "If it is quite true she does not love me, and nothing in me has deserved her love, that love without which there is no charm left for me in life, is that any reason I should die? Is it for my own personal happiness that I exist? Oh no! My whole existence is devoted to her, shall be hers in spite of herself. And by what right have I aspired to win her love? Am I more than an angel or a deity? I love her, it is true—I—even I! I am ready for her sake to sacrifice everything with joy—even the hope that she may love me; there is no

limit to the devotion for her that I am capable of; for one of her looks, for one of her smiles. But could I do otherwise? Is she not the one supreme object in my life? If she shows me indifference, if she even hates me, it will be my misfortune—that is all. What matter can it be, since it does not impair her happiness? Oh! yes; if she cannot love me, I must only blame myself. My duty is to wait upon her steps, to envelop her existence with my own, to be her defence against all perils, to offer her my head to set her foot on, even to place myself between her and every sorrow, without making any claim for myself—without expecting any reward. Too happy if from time to time she deigns to bend upon her slave a look of pity, and, Oh! if only she remembers me, and turns to me in a moment of danger! Alas! would she but permit me to give my life that all her desires might be accomplished, all her caprices attained! Would she but permit me to kiss with devotion and respect her very footsteps; would she but consent to lean upon me sometimes in life's difficult places—then I should have obtained the only happiness to which I have the presumption to aspire. Because I am ready to give everything up for her sake, is that any reason she should owe me any gratitude? Is it her fault that I love her? Must she fancy herself constrained because of that to love me? No! she may make what use she pleases of my devotion, she may pay me with hatred for my services, she may scorn my idolatry, she may treat me with contempt, but I shall have no right whatever to complain of such an angel, nor to cease

for a moment to lavish on her the care that she disdains. And when each one of my days shall have been marked by some sacrifice made for her sake, on the day of my death I shall not have paid all the infinite debt that my existence owes to hers."

Such were my thoughts at this time yesterday, Adèle, my much beloved, and such were the resolutions of my soul. They are the same to-day. Only now I have the certainty of happiness, of a happiness so great that I cannot think of it without trembling, and hardly believe it, even now.

Then is it true you love me, Adèle? Tell me, may I put faith in that most ravishing idea? Does it not strike you that I might become mad with joy if I could pass my whole life at your feet, sure of making you as happy as I should be myself; sure of being adored by you, even as I adore you? Oh! your letter has given me back peace; your words this evening filled me with happiness. Receive my thanks a thousand times; Adèle, my beloved angel, I should like to kneel before you as I would before a divinity. How happy you have made me! Adieu, adieu! I shall have a happy night dreaming of you.

Sleep sweetly, and let your husband take the twelve dear kisses that you promised him, and many more for which you have not yet given him permission.

MONDAY, *February 28th.*

I should be very sorry, my Adèle, to give you back, as yesterday evening you seemed to wish, that letter which, in spite of the cruel thoughts with which it

inspired me, has grown dear to me because it proves to me you love me.

It is with joy I own that all the fault was on my side, and it is with most sincere repentance that I implore you to forgive me. No, my Adèle, it is not for me to punish you. To punish you!—for what? Mine is but the right to defend and to protect you.

Let me always know all that happens to you; tell me about all you do, and what you think of. And here I have a little thing with which to reproach you. I know that you love balls; you told me yourself, not long ago, that waltzing was for you a great temptation. Why, then, did you refuse the offer made you a few days since? Do not make a mistake. When, for your sake, I gave up balls and evening parties, it was merely to rid myself of the trouble of going to them. I was making no sacrifice. It is never a sacrifice to give up a thing which does not give you pleasure. Now I have no pleasure but in seeing you—in being near you. But in your case, since dancing amuses you, to give up a ball is a real sacrifice. I am very grateful for your intention of making it for me, but I do not feel willing to accept it. I am indeed excessively jealous, but it would be ungenerous if for that reason I deprived you of pleasures suited to your age, pleasures which, no doubt, I could myself enjoy, if you were not all in all to me. Go, then, and amuse yourself Go to the ball, and in the midst of it do not forget me. I dare say you may see other men more charming, more gallant, more brilliant than I am; but I venture to say that you

will not find one whose tender love for you would be so pure and so disinterested as mine.

I will not worry you with my personal troubles; they are far from being irremediable. I forget them when I see you gay, serene, and happy.

Adieu! Tell me everything, either by word of mouth or in writing. Courage, prudence, patience. Pray the good God to grant me these three things, the last two especially, for, if you love me, I am safe to have the other. I hope you will not cry over this letter. As for me, I am joyous when I remember you are mine—for you *are* mine, are you not, my Adèle?

In spite of all future obstacles that may present themselves, I feel ready to cry with Charles XII.: "What God has given me, the devil himself shall not take from me!"

Adieu, forgive me, and let your husband fancy he is taking one of the ten kisses that you still owe him.

Thy faithful

VICTOR.

March 20, 1820.

Worried and hurried on all sides, I write a few words to you in haste, my charming Adèle, and I hope that our conversation and the proofs of entire confidence I gave you this morning have calmed you so that this letter may not be needed to that end. If you could only conceive how much I love you, you would realize how high you stand in my esteem. All comes to this. Tell me if you doubt my eternal, inviolable attachment. In that case, what would you have me do to prove it? Speak, and I will obey you.

I think, my Adèle, that by this time you must have been reassured as to what concerns me. I will give you every mark of confidence that it is in my power to offer you, and I faithfully promise that I will tell you everything that concerns myself, whether it can interest you or no. I will not reproach you for the reproaches contained in your letter. I thank you, on the contrary, for having let me know all your anxieties, and if ever you suspect anything unfavorable concerning me, I think it will be your duty not to hide such suspicions from me. How else could I justify myself? I would like, my love, to exhort you to patience, but that word sounds badly in my mouth. I can only offer you the consolation in your troubles that I have in mine. Is it any compensation that I suffer from the same griefs as yourself? But in this, my Adèle, I speak only for myself, for in whatever situation I may be, I can never be very unhappy so long as I believe that you still love me.

Adieu; be always sure of my esteem and my respect. I can say nothing more, except that I wish you would think as much good of me as I do of you. You see I say the same things over and over, because I am always thinking the same things. Forgive me all this talk, which I am keeping up as long as possible, because I cannot bear to say adieu.

But adieu at last, my Adèle, *tout à toi.*

YOUR HUSBAND.

Write me as often as you can, and burn my letters. I think prudence requires it. Adieu! adieu! But, for pity's sake, never destroy thine own!

March 28, 1820.

You ask me for a few words, Adèle, but what can I tell you that I have not told you a thousand and a thousand times? Shall I say over again how much I love you? But expressions fail me. . . . To tell you that I love you better than my life would be a small matter, for you know I care very little for life. Well, I must! . . . for I *must* . . . I forbid you, do you hear? to say anything more to me about my "*contempt,*" my "*want of esteem*" for you. You will make me seriously angry if you force me to repeat that I could not love you if I did not esteem you. And from what, if you please, could my *want of esteem* for you arise? If one or other of us is guilty, it assuredly is not my Adèle. But I am afraid you will despise me, because I hope you know the purity of my love for you. I am your husband, or, at least, I consider myself as such. You only can make me give up that name.

What is happening to you in your home, my dearest? Do they torment you? Tell me everything. I wish my life in any way could assist you.

Do you know that one thought makes three-quarters of my happiness? I dream that, in spite of all obstacles, I may be permitted yet to be your husband, even though it be only for one day. Suppose we were married to-morrow, and I were to kill myself the next day, I should have been happy for one day, and no one would have any reason to reproach you. You would be my widow. Would it not be possible, my Adèle, under certain circumstances, to arrange

matters thus? One day of happiness is worth more than a life of sorrow.

Listen, think of me, my love, for I think of nothing but you. You owe me that. I am trying to become a better man that I may be more worthy of you. If you only knew how much I love you! . . . Everything I do is somehow connected with you. I am working solely for my wife, my beloved Adèle. Love me a little in return.

One word more. Now that you are the daughter of General Hugo, do nothing unworthy of that station, suffer no one to fail in proper attention and respect to you. Mamma is very particular about such things, and I think my most excellent mother is right. You will fancy I have suddenly grown proud of my social rank, just as you thought I was proud of what people call my success; and yet, my Adèle, God knows that there is only one thing that could make me proud, and that is to be loved by you.

Adieu. You still owe me eight kisses, and I fear you will forever refuse to pay them.

Adieu; tout à toi, rien qu'à toi.

Early in April, 1820.

It was on the 26th of April, 1819, that I told you that I loved you. It is not quite a year ago. Then you were happy, gay, and free; perhaps thoughts of me did not then trouble you. How many difficulties, how many torments have I made you suffer in one year! Oh! for how many things you have to pardon me!

I should like to know what people say about me.

Have a little more confidence in your husband. I am very unhappy. You see, my love, that I can hardly put two ideas together; your letter has distressed me cruelly. I have, moreover, so many things to say to you, and so little time in which to write. How will all these things end? I know pretty well how they will end for me, but how will it be for you . . .?

Now all my hopes, all my desires, are concentrated only on you.

I wish very much to answer everything in your letter. How could you dare to say or hint that I could ever forget you? Could you by chance have been despising me? Tell me who are the people who talk about us? I am furious! You do not feel, as you ought to feel, how much better you are *in all respects* than those around you. I make no exception of those young girls, your pretended friends, who are enough to make the angels themselves account them devils.

Adieu, my Adèle, I see I am in no fit state to answer your letter, Excuse my bad writing. I will write the rest to-morrow—if I can.

TUESDAY, *April* 18, 1820.

I am wretched, my beloved Adèle, to know that you are ill; and if the ideas you have been forming about me have helped to make you so, I assuredly do not know how I can undeceive you. I asked you to tell me who were the *gossips* who had given you a bad opinion of me; you would not answer me, because, unhappily, it is possible you may have believed them.

. . . I further asked you to tell me of what faults they accused me, that I might correct them if what they said was just, or defend myself if they were false, and on this point also you have not thought fit to satisfy me. What do they say about me? Whatever it is, it is probably not favorable, either to my conduct or my character, and yet I take God to witness that I wish you knew all my actions without exception. I should then have little to fear from the silly chatter of your *friends*, and I believe you would think better of me than you do now. As it is quite possible that some one may have told you I was full of self-conceit, I beg you to believe that I am not saying this from vanity.

You accuse me vaguely of certain things. You say I seem embarrassed when I am with you. It is true. I am so, but it is because I would so gladly be always alone with you, and am annoyed by the inquisitive glances of people around me. You add that "I seem to feel *ennui* when with you." If you think me a liar, it would be useless to tell you over again that my only happy moments are those that I am able to spend with you.

And yet, my Adèle, in connection with these ideas, it may be right to tell you that the time may be at hand when I shall have to give up this last and only pleasure. Your parents look upon me with dislike, and assuredly they have good reason to complain of me. I acknowledge the wrongs I have committed against them—or rather the one wrong I have done them, for there is only one, and that is, I have loved you. You must feel that I cannot continue to visit

in a house whose master and mistress do not like to see me. I write you this with tears falling from my eyes, and I blush like a conceited fool, as I am.

Whatever may happen, accept my inviolable promise to have no other wife but you, and to become your husband as soon as it may be in my power. Burn all my other letters, but keep this one. They may part us, but I am yours—yours for eternity. I am yours—your property, your slave. Do not forget that. You may always make use of me as if I were a thing and not a person. Wherever I may be, near or far, write to me and tell me what I am to do for you. I will obey you or die.

This is what I want to say to you before I cease to see you, that you may at all times point out the way in which you think I could serve you, if you think proper to keep up any relations with me. Yes, my Adèle, I foresee I must soon give up all meetings with you. Encourage me a little. . . .

I am constantly engaged in bitter reflections. Since you have loved me you have learned to think yourself less *estimable* (that was your own word), and I, from day to day since I loved you, find myself growing better. It is because, dear Adèle, I owe everything to you. It is the wish to make myself worthy of you which makes me conscious of my faults. I owe everything to you. I love to repeat this. If I have always kept myself free from the excesses sadly too common among young men of my age, it was not because I have had no opportunities to go astray, but thoughts of you have protected me. Thanks to you, I have kept unstained the only things

that I can offer you, a body pure, and an unsullied heart. Perhaps I ought not to have said all this, but you are my wife; this will prove that I have hidden nothing from you, and how great is the influence you exert, and always will exert, upon your faithful husband,

V. M. HUGO.

The fears and sad forebodings that the letter of April 18th expressed were soon to be realized—more than realized—by what took place. All intercourse between the lovers was suddenly put an end to for some months.

Had Victor been imprudent? Had he made his appearance too often at the house, or in the garden, of the girl he loved? At all events, the vigilance of Mme. Foucher being aroused, she took the alarm, and warned her husband of what was taking place. M. Foucher was not willing to remain in uncertainty. If Victor's mother had not the least suspicion, what would she think of the conduct of her son? He was resolved to know at once.

M. Foucher himself might easily have been disposed to look not unfavorably on Victor's attachment to his daughter. But in any case there could be no question about allowing them to marry at their age; yet they might be separated for a time; they might wait and prove their constancy.

M. Foucher, chief clerk in the War Office, was a man held by all who knew him in high esteem; he wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and was in every respect an honorable man; but he had three children; he had only his salary to live upon, and his daughter would have no *dot* on her marriage. Victor's worldly prospects were even less promising. To be sure, he was the son of General Hugo, and generals of the Empire, even among Royalists, do not seem, in 1821, to have lost their prestige. Furthermore, M. Foucher was a great reader; he knew more about literature than he cared to show. He was quite able to appreciate Victor's talent, and to foresee his future career. He knew

what Chateaubriand had said about him, and how Alexandre Soumet had written a letter on the part of the Académie des Jeux Floraux, congratulating the young poet on "the prodigious hopes he held out to French literature." M. Foucher possibly thought his old friend Mme. Hugo might not show herself altogether averse to the marriage. But all must be straightforward and above board between them. He would go, therefore, and talk to her.

Victor knew his mother too well to feel anything but dread of such an interview.

The wife of General Hugo was the dearly beloved mother of her three sons, but she was greatly feared by them. She loved them tenderly, but she managed them roughly. She was the only parent who had had charge of the three boys, for General Hugo had at that time almost separated himself from his wife and sons. He had another domestic establishment, and the only connection he still kept up with his family was to pay a small sum annually for their support, which was very insufficient for their needs. Mme. Hugo, an arbitrary woman by nature, kept a very tight hold on the conduct of her sons. Her system was to leave them wholly free in all that concerned their intellectual progress, but to require from them in everything that concerned their conduct the most absolute obedience to her will. When the parents of Adèle should startle her by their surprising revelation, what would she do? Victor foresaw too well what sentence she would pass on him. He felt already he was bound and subjugated to her maternal will, both because he feared and because he loved his mother.

It was well known that he owed her twice over his life; that he came into the world so frail and delicate that it seemed as if he had not a day to live, and before he could grow well and strong he had long been weak and ailing. We have his own lines concerning it in his *Feuilles d'Automne*:—

> . . . Je dirais peut-être quelque jour,
> Quel lait pur, que de soins, que de vœux, que d'amour
> Prodigués à ma vie, en naissant condamnée,
> M'ont fait deux fois l'enfant de ma mère obstinée.

And the mother's love for the son whom she had saved was augmented by pride in his talents, when, as he grew in strength, she found him growing in ability. But the more she thought of him the more she exacted of him. She wanted him all for herself. Victor was well aware of this, and his heart throbbed with anguish when one morning he saw M. and Mme. Foucher come to his mother's house and heard them ask for a private interview.

This happened on April 26, 1820, just one year after the day when Victor had for the first time told Adèle that he loved her—April 26, 1819.

At first Mme. Hugo was stupefied by what they told her. Was it conceivable? Was it possible? Victor, who so short a time before had been a baby clinging to her skirts, Victor in love?—in love for months? He could not be in earnest! But it was serious. She knew her son. She knew his ardent nature, and she felt that keen pang—a mother's jealousy. Her son could love, and he did love, another better than herself, and that other was a young girl—almost a child! And, after all, who was she that had stolen from her the love of her own son? Here came in a mother's pride. Victor was the son of General Count Hugo; Victor had already acquired some celebrity, and before long he might see fame before him; then why might he not aspire to make one of the very best, the richest, matches?—and meantime he was making silly love to the daughter of a clerk in the War Office, a girl without family or fortune!

If Mme. Hugo had been prepared for the blow she was about to receive, she would assuredly have softened the expression of her sentiments to M. and Mme. Foucher; but, taken as she was by surprise, she put no curb on her tongue. Now or hereafter such a marriage was impossible! Never—never—as long as she lived, should such a marriage take place!

M. Foucher, whose paternal feelings were naturally much hurt, replied coldly. It was settled that the two families should at once cease to see each other, that all intercourse between them should be broken off. It was more than mere separation—it was an absolute quarrel.

They sent for Victor to tell him their decision. He

had had time to collect his strength and to arm himself with courage. He felt that he must show himself to be a man! It is strange, but he was not angry with his mother. It was his nature to find excuses for those he loved; but this father, who said it was his duty to watch over the purity of his daughter, a purity that Victor knew had never been in peril, seemed to him despotic and unjust. He subsequently wrote to Adèle: "Your father had no right to peer into a secret which belongs to us alone." He made up his mind, therefore, to assume a lofty attitude before this tyrant. He boldly confessed his love, and then listened to the sentence which shut him out from Paradise, without change of countenance. Only when Adèle's father and mother were gone, when he was alone with his own parent, the man disappeared, the child returned, and he burst into tears. His mother, much afflicted by the suffering of her beloved son, tried to console him. But he rushed away, and shut himself up in his chamber, where he wept and wept until he could weep no more. He must have wept like Jephthah's daughter, and doubtless for the same reason. Adèle was lost to him; what remained for him but death?

M. and Madame Foucher when they returned home seem to have avoided any clear explanation with their daughter as to the step that they had just taken. They only told her that all intercourse with the wife of General Hugo was broken off, that she would cease to see any of the family.

And Victor? Victor would not return. He refused to come back. That was all they said, and it left poor Adèle a prey to the most harrowing conjectures. Did Victor no longer love her? She refused to believe this, but she saw days, weeks, and months pass, in which she received no news of him. Her parents tried to make her forget her grief by receptions, visits, and little parties.

As she was very young and gay, she let them do with her what they would, and entered into these gayeties. There was even something planned about another marriage. We would wish to think that she consented to all this as a mere blind. For could she have wholly despaired when she read and reread Victor's letters,

with their ardent promises, their sacred vows? It seems unlikely that she did not read them, since we know she kept them carefully.

As for him, after his deluge of tears he recovered his energy and courage. Should he die? Of what use was it to die? Had he not devoted to her his life and love? He was bound to live. His mother might exact of him a promise that he would not see Adèle, but she could not obtain, she never would obtain, a promise that he would cease to love her. To win her for his wife, even if he had to do it in spite of the opposition of his mother, was his fixed purpose in life. He remembered the strong assurance which, with a singular presentiment, he had put into his last letter, signing it as he was not in the habit of signing those letters, with his full name:

> "Receive this, my inviolable promise, that I will have no other wife but thee. . . . They may possibly separate us, but I am thine—thine eternally!—V. M. HUGO."

How could he keep this promise? Only in one way, by work. Work only could bring him independence, and permit him—we must say it frankly—to earn money enough to make his mother more comfortable in the first place, and then to give Adèle's father a sufficient assurance that he was in a position to support a wife. He set to work, to use his own expression, "with the courage of a lion." And thus began that indefatigable toil which lasted during his whole life; the forge, once lighted, was never to go out.

In the month of December, 1819, Victor had founded, in connection with his brother Abel, in hopes of helping their mother, whose allowance from her husband was very small, a semi-monthly magazine, *Le Conservateur Littéraire.* Victor had undertaken the greater part of the work in the first numbers; but after the month of April he redoubled his zeal and activity. *Le Conservateur Littéraire* lasted fifteen months. Of the three large volumes which now contain it, Victor, under eight or ten signatures, certainly wrote two of them. The young journalist gives an account of everything that would interest the world of letters—books, poems, and dramas. He speaks with a wonderful maturity of judg-

ment of the works of Chateaubriand, André Chénier, of Lamennais, and Mme. Desbordes-Valmore, of the *Marie Stuart* of Lebrun, and of the *Vêpres Siciliennes* of Casimir Delavigne. While all this time he was trying to write a novel, the first version of *Bug-Jargal.*

But the great object of *Le Conservateur Littéraire* was to do battle for the cause of monarchy. *Le Conservateur,* the great political review of Chateaubriand, Lamennais, and Bonald, had just ceased to appear. As there was no line-of-battle ship in action, the little sloop bravely fought on. Victor put into his work all the ardor inspired by his love for his " Vendean mother." His first poems were his Royalist odes, *La Vendée, La Mort du Duc de Berry, Le Rêtablissement de la Statue de Henri IV.,* etc. Nothing could have been more sincere than his enthusiasm, nothing more disinterested. A sad note in *Le Conservateur Littéraire* gives us to understand that the official encouragement and material aid given to other Royalist publications were denied to these devoted young champions. Never mind! their zeal in the cause of monarchy would be the same.

Meantime this work, which hardly could fill all his time and thoughts, left poor Victor's heart empty. He never ceased to think of Adèle, but he had no one he could talk to about her. It was then that he began to write a novel, *Han d'Islande,* which might serve him as a confidant in his grief and loneliness. In it he called Adèle Ethel, and Victor, under the name of Ordner, addressed to her, on paper, all the loving words he could no longer speak or write to her. Only until the book should be finished and published she could not read or hear them. Then Victor thought of *Le Conservateur Littéraire.*

M. Foucher took the review, and he could hardly keep Adèle from seeing it. Among Victor's numerous literary activities, we have omitted to say that he found in an old chronicle of the fifteenth century the story of a young poet, a disciple of Petrarch, called Raymond d'Ascoli, who, parted from her he loved, preferred death. Victor composed an elegy on this young suicide, which he called *Le Jeune Banni,* and in his position of editor-in-chief inserted it in the July number of *Le Conservateur Littéraire* of 1820. It may have been at this time that there was talk of another

suitor for the hand of Adèle. Raymond d'Ascoli writes thus to his love—and Adèle with a beating heart might read the verses (not very good as poetry, but was she likely to mark that?):

> Bientot . . . lis sans retard, ô vierge adorée,
> Ce que trace ma main par *mes* pleurs égarée.
>
> . . . .
>
> J'ose t'ecrire! Hélas, à nos ardeurs naissantes
> Qu'eut servi jusqu'ici ce pénible secours!
>
> . . . .
>
> Hier . . . Te souvient-t-il fille douce et modeste
> De cet hier déjà si loin de moi?
> Je souriais, l'amour veillait seul avec nous;
> Et toi, dans ta gaîté naïve
> Tu m'appelais ton jeune époux.
>
> . . . .
>
> Hélas! oui, tu verras, rougissante, étonnée,
> Un plus heureux hâter ton rêve matinal,
> Et saisissant ta main dans sa main fortunée
> Te conduire au lieu saint . . .
> Et puis il cachera ton bandeau virginal
> Sous la couronne d'hymenée!
> Un autre!—ô douleur! ô tourment!
> Je t'aimais sans délire, et je t'aime avec rage!
> Mon Emma, songe à moi! respecte ton serment!

Adèle respected her vows, and Victor had given her this sign of life; so far well. But he had not been able at the same time to avoid the risk of afflicting and offending his mother, which he dreaded beyond everything. It is clear that Mme. Hugo, as well as Adèle, saw a transparent meaning in this poetry, and it is certain that a scene of tears and reproaches followed, and the cruel separation was made more bitter and complete for the two lovers. But once more the blessed *Conservateur Littéraire* became the means of ameliorating their condition.

M. Foucher, who was, as we have said, head clerk in the War Office, chanced to publish about this time a volume called *Manuel du Recrutement*, a technical book on an especial subject, which assuredly had no literary pretensions. But the young lover did not think so; he hastened to write a review of it in *Le Conserva-*

teur Littéraire, though the work could hardly be called literary. The review was very laudatory, for the book was written by the father of Adèle. To praise the work of an old friend who was master of the subject of recruiting could not be reprehensible, and Mme. Hugo found nothing to say against it.

The article pleased M. Foucher, no doubt, but, intrenched still in his dignity, he kept silence. Then Providence took the matter in hand, and happily at this very time gave France the royal infant she was eagerly looking for—the Duc de Bordeaux, "*l'enfant du miracle.*"

At once Victor composed an ode on the occasion; he inserted it in *Le Conservateur Littéraire,* and afterwards had it printed in a little pamphlet, which pamphlet he sent to M. Foucher, with a dedication, of which we may be sure he carefully chose the words. This time kind M. Foucher could not refuse to make some acknowledgment, without failing in the first principles of courtesy, and perhaps he was not sorry that it became his duty to be polite. However, he did not write to Victor, but to Mme. Hugo he addressed the following letter:

PARIS, *October* 13, 1820.

MADAME,—I have to thank M. V. Hugo for his flattering article on the *Manuel du Recrutement.* I have also thanks to give him for sending me as a present a copy of his ode on the birth of the Duc de Bordeaux. My wife is a sharer in my debt, for she has taken half the pleasure we have had in this poem.

Passages such as "*tel un fleure mystérieux*" and "*oui, souris orphelin,*" went to the hearts of an audience which is not especially poetical. As you know, none of us are good judges of poems.

I propose to call on these gentlemen, and to point out to them certain books which will offer a large field for criticism. I shall see them shortly, and

renew to you, madame, assurances of my respectful and sincere attachment.

Your very humble and obedient servant,

P. FOUCHER.

This was a little renewal of friendly intercourse, and Victor must have been delighted to receive a visit, were it only business-like and commonplace, from Adèle's father. But Adèle—Adèle herself—should he never see her again? What was she doing? What did she think of? Did she suffer as he suffered? Had she forgotten him? Could she love him still? It did not seem possible that she, who filled all his life, and all his thoughts, should live only a few yards from him, and yet that they should be as strangers.

Adèle at that time was taking lessons in drawing from a friend, Mademoiselle Duvidal, and Victor knew that Adèle almost every morning walked to her house alone. At the beginning of 1821 he took a great resolution; he went one morning and a little distance from her home ventured to accost her. After this she accepted and wrote notes which expanded into letters.

These letters were tender at first, but before long they became anxious and sometimes showed vexation. They had seen each other once more, and that was a great gain; but they could only meet in the street, and that involved great peril. Adèle soon perceived the risk she ran. She tried to put an end to these walks. Victor, in despair, grew angry. Then they were resumed, but Adèle contrived to make them fewer month after month. A stranger circumstance was soon to end them altogether.

1821

MARCH

SATURDAY (*early in March*, 1821).

Your last letter was very short, Adèle. You only let me see you for a few moments; you only sent me

a few words. What does this mean, unless that the sight of me is unwelcome, and that writing to me bores you? Nevertheless, Adèle, I will not worry myself over this thought which makes me wretched. I shall try to believe that if you endeavor to abridge the few moments we can pass together, it is only because you are afraid to be seen with your husband, and that when you persist in writing to me so briefly you have reasons for that also, reasons that indeed I cannot guess, but that I shall not the less respect. I wish to trust you in all things—or what would become of me?

When you seem to me to be cold or dissatisfied I pass hours turning over in my mind all kinds of motives, some of which may be true ones, but which would drive me to despair if I knew them to be so. No, my Adèle, in spite of the fears that torment me sometimes, when you meet me with apparent repugnance, or flit away from me with too much haste, I trust you blindly, and never, save in the last extremity, will I allow myself to believe that I have lost your love. For all the plans of my life are founded on my belief in your constancy, and if this should fail me, where should I be?

You ask me again and again a question that is very natural, and yet it gives me pain, because it shows that you have strange doubts of me. You tell me it was I who gave up going to your house a year ago. I have always very much regretted, Adèle, that you were not present when that pretended refusal took place. You might have judged for yourself whether it was possible for a man to

act otherwise than I did, and perhaps you would now have a higher opinion of me than you have to-day; but you were not present, and I will not reproach you for anything. However, any one who had confidence in me would be disposed to believe, even without having heard what passed, that if I accepted so great a misfortune, it was because I could not have done otherwise. I cannot demand so much of you. It is one of my strongest motives for wishing to have a few quiet moments' talk with you that I hope to destroy all those prejudices with which others have inspired you against your husband. Letters will not do this, because as you read them you make in your own mind answers to what I write, and I am not there to reply.

How much easier it is for you, Adèle, to justify yourself in my sight! All you need do is to tell me that you love me, and then all is forgotten.

You tell me that you cannot help thinking that if I do not try to come back to your house, it is because I fancy it would be impossible. Adèle, my dear Adèle, if you think I may, point out to me any honorable means by which I can come, and I shall be too happy to attempt it. I should be so happy to see you again with the consent of your parents, to pass my evenings beside you, to accompany you in your walks, to attend you everywhere, to fulfil all your wishes. Can you conceive with what joy I should exchange my constant solitude for so much happiness?

The great obstacle is the breach between our families. Our parents have quarrelled; I do not clearly

know for what,* and it seems to me now very difficult, even impossible, to bring them again together. See, reflect, perhaps you will at last end by once more deciding *we must wait.* It is that thought which drives me to despair. It is that which makes me hope before long to be so independent by my own exertions that I can take my own way, and my people will not be able to refuse it to me. Then, my Adèle, you will be mine, and I trust the time is not far off. I only work, I only live, for that day. You cannot conceive with what joyful emotion I write those words, *you will be mine*—I, who would give my whole life for a year, for a month, of happiness passed with you as my wife.

I make no reply to what you say about my "contempt," etc. How could you write it? If you had a little esteem for me, could you believe me capable of loving a being I despised? Appreciate yourself more fully. Consider how much you are above all other women in character, mind, and heart—they are false and coquettish. Why should I not, my Adèle, have the highest esteem for you? If my heart and my conduct have been always earnest and pure, it is because I thought of you; it was because I was firmly resolved to remain worthy of you—this has protected me. Adèle, you whom I have always seen so noble, so modest, do not think yourself guilty of any fault, I implore you. If you do, I shall consider myself a rascal; and yet I have committed no fault but that of loving you—if you think that to be one.

* He knows very well, but he will not accuse his mother.

Believe me, Adèle, if you love me, it may be a misfortune (for you, though not for me), but it can never be a crime. There is nothing but the tender love I feel for you which can equal my respect.

Adieu, my Adèle. It is very late, and I have no more paper. Excuse my scrawl. *Adieu, je t'embrasse!*

YOUR HUSBAND.

March 16th.

I had lost, Adèle, the habit of feeling happy, but I felt on reading your too short little note all the joy I have been deprived of for nearly a whole year. The certainty that you love me has suddenly drawn me out of my long apathy. I am almost happy! I am thinking how to find expressions to return you that sense of happiness, you who are the cause of it, and I can find none. Yet I must write to you. Too many emotions are crowding on me all at once; I cannot live without imparting them to you.

Besides, I am your husband, and you can have no scruples about corresponding with your husband. We are united by a sacred tie. What we do is justified in our own eyes, and some day it will be so in the eyes of the whole world. In corresponding with each other, we only exercise our right. We are doing our duty. Would you have the courage, my dear-beloved Adèle, to deprive me so soon of a happiness now all in all to me? We must both see into the depths of each other's soul. I repeat that, if you still love me, you ought to have no scruple about writing to me, as you are my wife. Cease, then, to be worried

about it. Write to me about all you think, and all you do. We shall thus live for each other; it will be almost as if we were once more living together. I, too, will send you a journal of all I am doing, for I like you to know all my actions. For a whole year I have always acted as if all I did was to be laid before you. I should be very happy, Adèle, if you could tell me the same! You promise me, do you not, from henceforth to tell me all about your pleasures and your pursuits, and to initiate your husband into all your secrets? Cultivate your charming talent.* But for you it must never be anything but a charming talent. You must never turn to it as a means of support—that is my affair. I wish that all through life yours should be all the pleasure, all the glory, if I achieve success; mine, all the work, all the pains. They will be sweet, if they are borne for you. Thou wilt be my soul, and I thine arm!

I have still a thousand things to tell thee, but this letter must end. Besides, I am not sure if you can read such a scrawl. Alas! all my happiness now consists in one hope—that you will answer me! Adieu, my adored Adèle, adieu! *Je t'embrasse!*

THY HUSBAND.

March 21st.

If—which seems impossible—you should have anything more you wish to tell me, as there is no chance of speaking to each other, you might write to me by post, directing your letter to

* Adèle could draw very prettily.

M. Victor Hugo, de l'Académie des Jeux floraux, poste restante, au Bureau général, Rue Jean-Jacques-Rousseau, à Paris.

That vain title will for once be of use to me; by using it you may be sure that your letter will fall into no hands but mine. From March 22d to March 30th I shall call at the post-office once a day. If during that time you do not send me a letter, I shall know that it is because you will have nothing more to say to me.

Adieu! Probably I ought before this to have ceased to use *thee* and *thou* to thee. I know I ought, but I could not do it. Adieu.

FRIDAY, *March 23d.*

One word from you, Adèle, has altered all my resolutions. Forget my last letter, even as I have forgotten all that your last contained, which was so painful to me. Is it, then, really true that you do not forbid me ever again to see you? Yes, I shall see you again, since you, my beloved Adèle, are so good as to persist in writing to me.

I even hope to find some means of reconciling what you owe to your husband with what you owe to the proprieties that you set up for yourself.

I will write you on this subject more at length next time. At this moment I have only time to send you a few words, in which I try in vain to express my gratitude and happiness.

Adieu, my adored Adèle. Write to me, and love me a little.

Je t'embrasse!

SUNDAY, *March 25th.*

I was made very unhappy, my Adèle, by not seeing you yesterday morning, as I had hoped to do. If you had received my last letter without sending me any consoling words we should have never seen each other again. But you gave me at that very moment a proof of affection which deeply moved me, and you have consented to write to me as before. I wanted to take back that letter because of what I said in it in a moment of anger and discouragement. You would not give it me, and you read what now I wish you may already have forgotten. It was therefore important I should see you on Saturday, to remove the impression of that unhappy note.

I had already written you a few words, which you will find enclosed in this letter. A most unlucky circumstance prevented me from giving it to you. Forgive me, therefore, my last letter, as I forgive you all the doubts that yours had caused me. You are willing to write to me again, but I must not put too great a strain on your generosity. You run risks, you say, of being seen with me; you fear the prying eyes of all the gossiping old women in the quarter, and I am trying to find the means of reconciling these miserable conventionalities with the happiness of seeing you, for that I cannot forego. Tell me yourself what you wish us to do. If you really wish we should meet only once a week, once a fortnight, once a month . . . I will obey you; and such terrible obedience will be the greatest proof that I could give you of an attachment that has no limit to its devotion. Then we will write to each other

and exchange letters every time we meet, and you shall tell me all about yourself, for it is the only subject that can interest me.

As for coming to your house, I see no possible way of doing it, at least for the present. My family is ambitious for me, as I am for you. Some day I hope, if I succeed in being able to help them, if I can put them into easy circumstances and give them some fortune, they will consent to my being happy. If not, I shall take my own way. This is my only hope. Those who would like to tear me apart from you little know that I should then be nothing.

Adieu, my Adèle. Try to answer all I have said in my letter, and arrange everything as may be best for your own comfort and happiness, in comparison with which mine is as nothing.

YOUR FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

I saw you to-day at Saint Sulpice and at M. de Leymerie's. I was just entering a house where once I had seen you dancing.

FRIDAY, 4 P.M., *March 29th.*

One word more, for pity's sake, my Adèle. Do you not know that it is very hard for me to resign myself to remain one whole month without speaking to you? A month is an eternity. Give me at least the consolation of seeing you once more before such a long separation.

Besides this, could I be one long, whole month without thanking you for the charming present you have given me, while at the same time you impose so cruel an obligation? I do not know, my adored

Adèle, what expressions to employ to describe to you the joy with which I received this pledge of our eternal union. I did all sorts of extravagant things. The hair was yours, my Adèle, and now part of yourself is mine already! How can I repay you for all you do for me? I have only one wretched life, but it belongs to you; that is not much to say. Make anything of me you will; I am your husband and your slave.

And yet you will say I begin by disobeying you. Adèle, just think, I shall have to wait a month. A month! Good heaven! would not two weeks have been long enough? Two weeks are so long! I implore you, think over it, and try to tell me on the 28th of April that we shall meet again in two weeks. I will obey you all this sad month of April, since the decree has gone forth; but try to make obedience less difficult for me.

Adèle, I see I am more selfish than I thought; yet think how long a month is! What would become of me without seeing you? Good heaven! if I could not press against my heart this lock of hair, which will never be parted from me!

Adieu, my wife, my beloved Adèle. Forgive me for writing to you. *Je t'embrasse tendrement!*

Your faithful husband,

V. M. HUGO.

In case — which God forbid! — anything should happen to interfere with our intercourse, you can safely write to the address I have already given you. Adieu for a great long month.

Remember that on April 28th I shall expect a very long letter, a sort of journal of everything you have thought, and every one of your actions. Adieu!

April 26th.

Do you remember, Adèle, that this day is the anniversary of that which determined the course of my whole life? It was on the 26th of April, 1819, when I one evening was sitting at your feet, that you asked me to tell you my greatest secret, and promised in return to tell me yours? All the circumstances of that delicious evening are as fresh in my memory as if all had happened yesterday, and yet since then how many days of misfortune and discouragement have passed! I hesitated a few moments before I surrendered to you the secret of my life, and then tremblingly I confessed that I loved you; but after the reply you made me, Adèle, I felt the courage of a lion. I at once, with energy, seized on the idea of trying to be something for your sake; my whole being seemed to have new strength. I saw at least one certain prospect before me on this earth, that, namely, of being loved by you. Oh! tell me that you have not forgotten that evening; tell me that you remember it all! My whole life has ever since been lived in the happiness or the sorrow that dated from that day. Is it not true, my beloved Adèle, that you, too, have not forgotten it?

Well, by a strange fatality that fills me with wonder whenever I feel myself out of humor with Providence (forgive me for saying it), the very anniversary of my happiness (and let me say of yours) was

the day selected for a total change. It was on April 26, 1820, that our families discovered what no one had any right to know but ourselves in our own souls. The 26th of April was the date of all my hopes; the 26th of April is the date of my despair. I only had one year of happiness. My second year of sorrow is now going to begin. Will there be a third?

You do not know, Adèle—and it is a confession I could make to no one but yourself—that the day on which it was decided that I must see you no more I wept. Yes, indeed, I wept as I had not wept for ten years, and doubtless as I shall never weep again. I had gone through a very painful scene; I had listened to the sentence of our separation with a face as unmoved as brass or iron; then, when your father and mother had gone away, my mother, seeing me stand pale and speechless, became more tender than even she was wont. She tried to comfort me, but I rushed away, and when I was alone I wept long and bitterly. I had remained impassive and strong so long as I saw in my separation from you only the prelude to my death. But a little reflection showed me that it was my duty to cherish your defender's life, so long as that life might be of use to you. Then I wept like a coward. I had no longer any control over myself when I recognized the duty of living—of living parted from you.

Since then I only breathe, I only speak, I only move, I only act, thinking of you. My state is one of widowhood, since I cannot be near you. There is no other woman in all the world to me, except my mother. When I am forced to make my appear-

ance in fashionable or literary *salons* I am considered the coldest of human beings. No one knows that I am the most impassioned.

All this may perhaps weary you, but I am giving an account of myself to my wife. It would make me very happy if you could say the same of yourself to me.

I saw you this morning, and again this evening. I felt that I must see you on such an anniversary—that it must not pass without some little joy. This morning I did not dare to speak to you; you had forbidden me to do so before the 28th. I obey your orders, but they are very painful to me. Adieu for this evening, Adèle; the night is far advanced; doubtless you are asleep, not thinking of the curl of thy dark hair which, every night before going to sleep, thy husband presses to his lips as a sacred duty.

April 27th.

To the sadness which during the past year has become my second nature there has been added during the last few days a weariness, an exhaustion from overwork, which from time to time throws me into a strange state of apathy. I have no pleasure but in writing to you, and then my difficulty is to find words which will give you an adequate picture of my ideas and my emotions. You must sometimes, I fear, Adèle, think the language of my letters strange and extravagant, but that is because of the difficulty I find in expressing to you, even imperfectly, what I feel for you.

I am expecting from you a long—a very long—

letter, which will compensate me somewhat for this long month of waiting; a complete journal, which will let me into the secret of all your actions, all your thoughts. I, too, should have kept a diary for you, if I had been as sure you would not tire of it as you can be sure that every word of yours will be interesting to me. However, my daily journal could have been summed up in these words: "I thought of you all day, whatever I was doing, and all night I thought of you in my dreams."

What more could I say to you? That I saw you twice at Saint Sulpice, and that twice you refused me the permission to accept what the good God seemed willing to offer me, the happiness of our passing an hour together. That I met you one evening near your own house, and that of us two the only one who showed any recognition of the other was I. That I saw you in the Luxembourg on the 23d of April, and then bitterly reflected that on the 23d of April, 1820, I gave you my arm for the last time.

Shall I tell you how many times at night, returning from my lonely walks, I have stopped at the entrance of the Rue d'Assas, before a light that I knew was in your window? How many times I have thought, when I saw the young leaves on the trees, of the hours we passed together in your garden! If you sat down, it was near me, your arm leaned upon mine, your hand was not withdrawn from my hand, our eyes could always look into each other, and if from time to time I dared to press you to my heart, you only repulsed me with a smile. Adèle, Adèle! think what I have lost!

I am too agitated when I think of these things to go on. Let me break off. I will resume my letter this evening.

Midnight.

After a few more hours, Adèle, I shall see you again; I shall speak to you again; I shall receive your letter. Those hours will pass very slowly—more slowly even than this eternal month of April. Tell me, my dearest, has it seemed so long to you as it has to me, this long month of loneliness? Have you been dreaming, as I have, with delight of the 28th of April? Alas! all I dare to ask is that you may sometimes have thought of it with pleasure. That is all I venture to hope.

You must at least have softened the rigor of your first decision; you must have had pity upon me. Surely, from this time we may see each other once a week, may we not? And you will try to arrange that we may pass some time together? You do not know what I am hoping for at this very moment—madly, perchance. It is that to-morrow you will not have the courage to leave me so promptly as you generally do; that we might go for a moment into the Jardin des Bains, which is sure to be empty; that your arm may once more lean on mine; that I may look at you once more at my ease, a happiness I have not had for such a long time. Surely, Adèle, you cannot refuse me this?

But I am mad. You will hardly look at me; you will slip into my hand in secret a little note that you have had no pleasure in writing to me; you will say about three words to me, just as if an angel had to

speak to a devil, and you will disappear, before I have had strength to make my prayer asking you to talk to me a moment longer, a prayer that you would gladly give me no need to make if you loved me as I love you.

See, Adèle, how chance or my good angel has done for me what you would not do. You told me I must not see you all this month. Well, they have several times brought me within sight of you. Thus, on the 15th of last July, I met you at the ball at Sceaux. I had several times obstinately refused to go there. At last I yielded to persuasion, or rather to the advice of my good angel who was leading me, although I knew it not, towards her whom I was looking for everywhere! You seemed displeased to see me, and I had the cruel happiness of seeing you dance all the evening with other partners. You see, Adèle, I love you more than you love me, for nothing in the world would have induced me to dance at that ball. We went home before you did. I was very tired, but I insisted on walking back to Paris, hoping that the carriage in which you rode would overtake me; and, as it happened, half an hour later a *fiacre* passed me, in which I thought I recognized you. This fancy paid me for the dust and the fatigue of my long tramp.

Adèle, forgive me, I may tire you, but do you love me thus? Let me talk to you a little of my deep devotion. Nothing in me is perfect but the merit of deeply loving you. Adieu. I am at all events very grateful for all that you have done for me.

Adieu, my adored Adèle. It is adieu only for a

short time, I hope. Sleep soundly, and let me embrace you very tenderly, but very innocently, in your dreams.

YOUR HUSBAND.

This meeting on the 28th of April, from which Victor promised himself so much happiness, was their last. The lovers after that day ceased to see each other, or even to write. Not that they had been discovered, and once more separated by a parental decree, but Mme. Hugo, whose health had been failing for some months, became very ill early in May. From that moment Victor scarcely left her pillow, and devoted himself entirely to her. Her illness, with alternations of worse and better, lasted two months. Mme. Hugo died on the 27th of June.

It was a deep grief to Victor. His capacity for affection, to which he sometimes makes allusion in his letters, had need of family ties, and the adoration he bestowed upon his mother had supplied that need, with the sweet consciousness that he, too, was infinitely beloved by her. He had twice owed her his life, and now he felt twice orphaned. He was estranged from his father, who was indifferent to him, to say the least of it. He was coldly treated by his brothers, who were jealous of his superiority, and separated from Adèle, whose hand was refused him. He felt himself all alone in the wide world.

His wretchedness was increased by an unhappy incident. He will tell it in one of his letters; we will only allude to it here. On June 29th, the evening of the day when his mother was buried, he left the house, unable to bear its emptiness and solitude, and instinctively, as he often did, found his way into the neighborhood of the Hôtel de Toulouse. Its windows were a blaze of light; it was M. Foucher's fête day; there was a ball going on there. Victor knew all about the place; he went up to the second story, went into an empty room, from which a little inside window looked into the ball-room, and thence he saw Adèle dancing and gay. Subsequently she proved to him that the news

of his mother's death had been carefully concealed from her, and assured him that had she known of his presence she would have risked everything to leave the ball-room and have come to him to share his sorrow. But at the time he was absolutely overwhelmed by this fresh blow.

His father showed him little tenderness. He sent him word that he would make him an allowance on condition that he would give up literature; Victor refused. He had only eight hundred francs in his possession, but such was the strength of his will that this little sum seemed to him enough with which to face the future.

M. Foucher thought it proper to pay him a visit of condolence, and Victor returned the visit, but he was not allowed to see Adèle. M. Foucher even assured him that it would be better for him to leave Paris for a time. We know already that the Foucher family was in the habit of hiring during the summer some small place in the country; generally it was in the suburbs, and three or four leagues would not have kept Victor away. On July 15th, however, M. Foucher, with his wife and daughter, went to Dreux, twenty-five leagues away from Paris, and twenty-five francs besides. On the 16th of July Victor set out, and in three days reached Dreux, having tramped all the way.

The next day he was walking about the town when he suddenly met M. Foucher, who was accompanied by Adèle. He took care they should not see him, but he sent M. Foucher a letter, a manifestly fictitious letter. Its falsehood seems almost touching from its frankness. He wrote:

"MONSIEUR,—I had the pleasure of seeing you today here in Dreux, and I asked myself, could it be a dream! . . ." Then, to explain what he calls "a most extraordinary chance," he relates that he had come down from Paris on the invitation of a friend living between Dreux and Nonancourt. However, this friend, by a strange fatality, left home for Gap the evening before he arrived. Victor would have returned at once to Paris, but being well acquainted in Dreux, he had received invitations, made engagements, "and what is very remarkable is that I left Paris with much reluctance. The wish you

expressed to have me absent myself for some time contributed to my decision. Your advice has had a singular result." The letter, however, ends with what is true and sincere: "I should not be candid if I did not tell you that the unexpected sight of mademoiselle your daughter gave me great pleasure. I venture to say boldly that I love her with all the strength of my soul, and, in my complete isolation and my deep grief, nothing but thoughts of her can give me joy or pleasure."

Good M. Foucher may well have smiled over Victor's narrative of "extraordinary coincidences." But what could he do to checkmate a lover so persistent—such an indefatigable pedestrian? He felt that he must believe in the sincerity and firm purpose of the young man.

He let him come to his house, and had an explanation with him, in the presence of his daughter.

Victor boldly asked him for Adèle's hand. He, of course, set forth his position in the best light he could, but it was terribly uncertain. He said that he had money enough in hand to live upon while awaiting developments in the future. He said he had partly written a romance in the style of Walter Scott, which he hoped might bring in a good sum; and that because of services he had done to certain persons he had received positive promises of a government place, or a pension. As to the consent of his father, he felt sure of obtaining it, if he did not proceed too incautiously. But he did not say that he was very doubtful of obtaining this consent from the general, who was completely under the influence of a woman who was opposed to him; nor did he say that although he had all possible claims to a pension from the king's government, he was too proud to push forward such claims, however incontestable. At present he only wanted time, and, without taking his extreme youth into account, he counted on what he might do himself to achieve independence.

M. Foucher, only half convinced, but very much moved when he thought of the young man's courage, gave his consent to allowing Victor once more to visit at his house. The engagement of the young people was not to be officially acknowledged nor made known to the public. That could not be until Victor's

financial situation was put upon a surer basis. Till then they might see each other once a week, but never alone; they might meet in the Luxembourg Gardens; they might go to the theatre in a family party. Victor, as he could not do better, accepted these conditions. There was nothing more to be done at Dreux, and they all went back to Paris.

Correspondence was renewed, but, alas! it was only with Adèle's father. Victor could not write to him about the ardor of his love, but what he wrote showed the firmness of his character. He addressed M. Foucher thus:

. . . The dearest thing I have at heart, is it not the happiness of mademoiselle your daughter? If she can be happy without me, I will be ready to retire, although the hope of being hers some day is my sole trust and expectation. In any case, however, I will not attain happiness by any road that is not straight and honorable. I would not that she should ever blush for her husband. I think, without presumption, I shall end by attaining happiness, because I have a firm will, and a firm will is very powerful. Whatever may be the result of my efforts, though obtaining her may be necessary to my happiness and my life, to have deserved her must be balm to my conscience and my feelings.—*Letter of July 28th.*

. . . A little check will not annihilate great courage. I do not conceal from myself the uncertainties or even the possible dangers of the future; but I have been taught by a brave mother that a man can master circumstances. Many men walk with uncertain steps upon firm ground; a man who has a good

conscience and a worthy aim should walk with a firm tread even on dangerous ground. —*Monfort l' Amaury, August 3d.*

At the end of this month of August he was staying at the château of his friend, the young Duc de Rohan, but his spirit of independence would not let him remain there long. He writes thus:

Madame la Duchesse de Berry, who is at Rosny, is to come and stay at the château in a few days' time. M. de Rohan wants to keep me here at least until she arrives, but I do not like to take advantage of his kindness. I do not like the thought that my exceptional pecuniary position should lead to my becoming the dependant of a man whom my social position enables me to consider my friend. I have a strong regard for the Duc de Rohan for his own sake, for his noble soul, and for his courtly manners; but I do not care for him in view of the material services he might be able to render me.

Thereupon Victor came back to Paris, where his great attraction awaited him. The lovers saw each other very frequently in September. But soon these interviews, being always in the presence of a third person, were not enough for him. He induced Adèle to give him an occasional meeting out-doors, and their sweet correspondence was once more renewed.

FRIDAY, *October 5th.*

I wrote you a long letter, Adèle, but it was too sad; I tore it up. I wrote it because you are the only creature in the world to whom I can speak freely of all I suffer and of all I fear. But perhaps it might have given you some pain, and I will never volun-

tarily make you suffer by my troubles. Besides, I forget them at once when we meet. You do not know—you cannot imagine—how great my happiness is when I see you, hear you speak, and feel you near me! Now that I have not seen you for two days, I think of it with an excitement that seems almost convulsive. When I have passed a few moments beside you I feel much better. There is something in your very glance, so noble and so generous, that seems to exalt me. When your eyes meet mine, it is as if your soul passed into me. And then—oh, then! my beloved Adèle, I feel capable of accomplishing anything; I am strengthened by being endowed with all your gentle virtues.

How much I wish that you could read all that there is within me; that your soul could be infused into mine, as your smile infuses itself into my whole being! If we could be alone together, just for one hour, Adèle, you would see how much I should need your pity, were it not that I possess the greatest of all happinesses, the sweetest of all consolations, in the thought that you love me.

I had written to you about my troubles, without reflecting that I was writing to you about things that could only be told in speech, and told to you alone. . . . I see I am now falling back into the same reflections which made me tear up my former letter. Remember, my Adèle, that all troubles count for nothing as soon as I have the indescribable happiness of seeing you; what, then, does it matter that the rest of my day should be sad, and when at last I have won you, my beloved Adèle, what shall

I care for these years of trial which now seem so long and so painful to me?

Adieu. Write to me, and increase as far as possible, I implore you, our brief interviews. They are my only consolation, for I do not think that you will wrong me so far as to imagine that the pleasure derived from *amour-propre* and pride in my literary success are anything to me. You only are my joy; in you is all my happiness; in you, my life. You are all your sex to me, because I find concentrated in you all that is most perfect in women.

Adieu, my dearest Adèle. *Je t'embrasse bien tendrement et bien respectueusement.*

YOUR FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

THURSDAY.

I have thought much and long, Adèle, over this answer. Ought I—can I—satisfy you? There was more of compassion than of tenderness in your letter. I thank you for taking some pity upon me; I am indeed very much to be compassionated for more than one reason. It seems to me, if I must tell you what I hardly dare say to myself, that your letters are becoming colder and colder. At one moment it seemed as if you were once more what you had been two years ago; but this moment . . . Ask yourself seriously. I fear lest this fatal trial of eighteen months* may have destroyed the happiness of my whole life by diminishing your first affection. For my part, I cannot be happy if I am only half loved.

* The separation, in fact, had been only for nine months, but it seems that such months counted double.

See, look into yourself, and tell me if you can candidly say that during this long absence *you have never forgotten me a single instant.* I have several times asked you this question, but have never obtained a direct answer. Answer me now truly, I implore you. I shall guess the truth if you do not tell it me, and it is from your own mouth, and not my own conjectures, that I would receive death or life.

Adèle, you see that a cold glance or an indifferent word from you suffices to renew all my insupportable doubts, and assuredly, of all my sufferings, that would be the greatest; it would go to my very heart. All other griefs might pass away, but what could console me for that one? And who knows if even after death we could forget what it was to have been no longer loved?

If you were only an ordinary woman, Adèle, I should do more to show you how deeply your image is engraven in my heart. I should do wrong to let you see the slavish love which makes my whole being submit itself to yours; an ordinary woman would not understand this, and would only see in my unconquerable passion an advantage given her to do anything she pleased with a man of whom she felt herself secure. An ordinary woman, whose attachment the man devoted to her was anxious to increase, would find it his best plan to treat her carelessly and inconsistently, sometimes affectionately, and then again with indifference. He would pretend to have other fancies; he would leave her, come back to her, and alarm her vanity, that he might excite her jealousy—in short, he would

play a part to win her love. But I am not an actor, and you are very far from being an ordinary woman.

What value, indeed, could be attached to the passing affection of such a being? Would it be worth the trouble of putting on a mask, and degrading one's self by admitting petty, vile arts and calculations into the most noble of all feelings? I would never act thus with you, Adèle; I love you with self-respect because I love you truly. I think that a trick would lower us both, and that your heart is noble enough to understand and to appreciate an overpowering love. Answer the question I have put to you with all frankness and confidence. All depends upon what you tell me.

I have read over this letter, and I tremble for its answer. No matter! The future can be determined by a word, as an avalanche is by a pebble, or a conflagration by a spark. What is our life, and what the thread by which we hang suspended between heaven and hell? I am greatly excited, Adèle, and yet, if you could at this moment see my face, you would find it cold and icy, like the faces of the dead. I will resume this letter later.

How does it happen that while writing these two long pages I have forgotten or neglected what should have been the subject of this letter—the request you made me, the confidence you seem to seek? It is because I was tormented with the idea that you no longer loved me, and, that being the case, how could I think of other things? What are all my other troubles compared to such a grief?

FRIDAY.

Hear me, my Adèle; forgive me what seems bitter in the last two pages. The least thing irritates me, dearest. It is because I am constantly assailed by painful fancies. All my days are passed in sadness, except the few delicious hours when I may see you. Forgive me—oh! forgive me. It would seem very sweet, my dear Adèle, to pour all my sorrow into your soul, which is so kind and so generous; but I must repeat that that can only be *vivâ voce*, and I fear, as you do, that for a long time that must be impossible. I will suffer alone. It is not that I fear for your letters. All that I have to tell you I might tell before the whole world without having cause to blush for myself. But there are a number of little things which it would be too trivial to commit to writing, and which, nevertheless, constitute our cares from day to day.

Here is one last consideration. I have fancied, Adèle, that I could remark that you thought I had self-love—well, not to mince the word, *vanity*. When I perceived this it could not but give me pain. If you are right, if I am really *vain*, I ought to be sorry that among my many faults there is one that I detest and despise more than any other in the world. If you are wrong, if you mistake for self-conceit a proper pride—a feeling I acknowledge, and that I am even glad is mine—I must deplore more than ever that I am misjudged by the only being without whose esteem I could not exist—above all, if what seems to her a fault, and the meanest of all faults, is, in my own opinion, the highest quality in any man who recognizes

the dignity of his own soul. You should realize, my Adèle, how much I wish to efface this idea from your mind, if you have really entertained it. It is, in that case, only by making the least possible mention of myself that I can succeed in dissipating it. Now, with respect to the confidence you ask of me, I should have to tell you a crowd of things which you do not know, and if I told them, your prejudices might make you think I was wanting in modesty, however I might try to veil my account with simplicity. So I have resolved to continue to keep my troubles to myself, and this partly because I see no necessity for annoying you with them until that time when I may find consolation for all my griefs by pouring them at all times into your bosom.

Meantime, I see my future impeded in every way by a crowd of selfish men, who think only of their own interest; but my future is yours only. I defend it because it belongs to you. You know me very little, Adèle, you little understand my character, for you never see me except under the constraint of the presence of some third person. But wait, I implore you, before passing judgment on me. Some one must have had some purpose a year ago in inspiring you with unfavorable impressions concerning me, and I — what I should most earnestly have asked of God, and do ask of Him, is to have had you always, then as now, the invisible witness of all my actions, whether important or only trivial.

The testimony of a pure conscience is very dear to me; it is the sole ground on which I claim to be worthy to be loved by you; it is the only thing about

which I feel pride. All other things are smoke, about which I care little, and the truth is, that if ever I should wish for what they call fame, it would be only for your sake.

I must end, and yet I have many things still to say! Never speak of yourself again to me, beloved Adèle, as an *ordinary woman.* Be as humbly modest as you will, but do not force me to be so in anything that concerns you.

Adieu. Keep well. I embrace you tenderly. Adieu, adieu. Above all, keep well.

YOUR FAITHFUL AND RESPECTFUL HUSBAND.

MIDNIGHT, MONDAY.

I cannot read a word you write, my dear Adèle, without its filling me with joy or sadness, and sometimes with both at the same time. That is the effect produced on me by your last letter. I saw that my injustice was as great as your generosity, and although you were perhaps a little too severe in that part of your letter in which you pointed out how wrong I had been, it is my duty to acknowledge my faults, and my happiness to be able to ask you to forgive them. You know, my Adèle, that if I sometimes worry you, it is only because I so dearly love you, alas! and I worry myself a great deal more. I am mad, but mad for love, and, my dearest, ought not that to make me find grace in your sight? All my soul is consumed in loving you. You are my sole thought, and it is impossible for me to find—I do not say happiness—but the smallest pleasure when apart from you. All the rest is hateful to me.

The end of your letter, Adèle, greatly moved me. You despair of our mutual happiness, and yet you say that it is in my hands. Yes, my Adèle, my beloved promised wife, it is; and I am certain, if you love me, to attain it, or else die. And what, after all, are the obstacles to be overcome? Whose will will dare to oppose mine when it relates to you? Do you not know that there is not a drop of blood in my veins which is not ready to flow for you? And can you doubt me still? Ah! my Adèle, love me as I love you, and I will take care for all the rest. A strong will can mould destiny, and when one has learned how to suffer, one has learned how to will. Besides, the man who risks his life in the game he plays to win his future, is almost sure to win in the long run; and I . . . will marry no one but you, or else sleep in a pine coffin.

We need so little to make us happy, Adèle! A few thousand francs a year and a *yes*, granted either with indifference or from paternal affection. Give us but these two things, and my dream of happiness will be reality. Does it really seem to you so difficult?

No, my Adèle, you are mine, and I am yours, through all eternity. Can you picture to yourself such happiness? Tell me, do you think of it with all the rapture and delight that your virginal and tender soul is so fitted to experience? Can you picture the felicity of your Victor passing his whole life at your feet, pouring all his griefs into your bosom, enjoying everything because you take part in it, breathing the air you breathe, loving with your heart, living only in the life you live? When, dear-

est, I think of the deliciousness of our lives being in common, I cannot help thinking that God would not have given me the power to imagine such happiness if He had not also in store for me its future enjoyment. Ah! *you were born to be happy,* or else I shall have been good for nothing in this world.

I want you to have a little esteem for me, Adèle. It is the dearest reward of all I may be able to do to make myself more worthy of you. I earnestly thank you for the assurance you have given me, for if you did not esteem me, could you love me; and if you did not love me, what should I do?

Adieu for this evening, or, rather, for this night. Adieu, my beloved Adèle; it is very late, and it is bitterly cold. You are asleep at this moment, and nothing will make you conscious of the burning kiss that your poor husband is about to press upon your lock of hair in your absence. It will not always be so; and some day his kisses will awaken you softly. Adieu, adieu; sleep, and know no sorrow.

TUESDAY.

This morning I received a note from your father. Then I may see you this evening, Adèle! I have thought of nothing else all the morning. The thought makes me happy, especially when I think that the same thought may make you happy too. My happiness would be perfect, dear Adèle, if I could only sometimes see you alone, and enjoy all the charm of intimacy. I would lay before you all the opinions, for which you seem so strongly to blame me; it is only you who could make me change

them. I should also try to alter some of the ideas which seem to me unsuited to your happy nature.

You tell me, for example, that you are not able to appreciate poetic talent. This assertion is so strange to me, who know you better than you know yourself, that I should laugh at it if I felt like laughing. I reply (putting myself, you must understand, quite out of the question), and you will certainly not do me the injustice to think that any feeling of personal vanity enters into these general reflections.

In two words, then, poetry, Adèle, is the expression of all goodness. A noble soul and real poetic talent are almost always inseparable. You see, then, why you ought to comprehend poetry. It comes from the soul, which can manifest its nobleness by a good action as well as by a fine poem. It would demand some time and pains to develop this idea, but you may see how in a quiet talk with you alone I could reveal to your own heart treasures that as yet you have never known. This happiness is for the present denied to me. I can only hope for it hereafter, together with many more.

Adieu, my beloved Adèle; think of me, and write me a very long letter, though, no doubt, it will seem to me very short. Let your husband embrace you tenderly. Adieu, adieu.

Above all things, never speak to me again of wanting to *work*, etc., etc. Every time you touch on that subject you pain me greatly. Have some confidence in my strength. It is my place to work for you, and the happiness of creating a place for



Adèle Foucher at 19





Adèle.



you in life belongs to me, like everything else that is connected with you. Adieu. Write me a very long letter.

SATURDAY, *October 20th.*

Behold me, alone in this melancholy apartment, counting the hours that divide the morning from the evening. What am I going to write to you? My heart is full, but my mind is a blank. My desire is to speak only of yourself, of our love, of our hopes, or of our fears; and did I do this, words would fail me in which to express my thoughts. But it is necessary for us to discuss trivialities, importunate nothings, which are a source of annoyance to you, and for that reason are odious to me. I must make it plain to you that all this gossip is as worthless as the idle moments that it occupies. I must reassure you and console you in regard to trifles which ought not to occasion you either uneasiness or alarm.

What can I say to you seriously, my Adèle? That I am resolved to marry you? Ah, well, are you ashamed of that, or are you in doubt about it? Perhaps you are afraid to own that you love me? If this is so, it is because you do not love me. When one really loves, one is proud of loving.

Do not misunderstand the intention of these words, dear love; I do not intend them to convey the idea that you ought to be proud of the object of your affection—that is an honor which I am far indeed from meriting—but you should be proud of possessing a soul capable of experiencing love, that elevated, noble, and chaste passion. Of all the passions which torment men in life, it is the only one that is eternal.

Love in its true and divine conception creates in the being who experiences it all good qualities, as it does in thee; or else it creates in him the desire to possess them, as in myself. A love such as I feel for you, my Adèle, raises every sentiment above the miserable sphere of humanity. It is a union with an angel who draws us steadily upward towards heaven. These expressions would, perhaps, strike an ordinary woman as extravagant; but you are created to understand them, since it is you yourself who inspire them.

We seem to have travelled far from the absurd gossip which was the subject of our discussion. If we were not pledged to each other, Adèle, I would put an end to it by my own withdrawal. It would be the only means of closing people's mouths, and even so it might not be successful. In our case, it is for you to determine whether such a step is necessary; if you decide in favor of it, I will come less often, or I will cease to come altogether, until my fate shall be decided. Your decision in favor of this arrangement will afford me convincing proof that I alone shall suffer in consequence of it, and I will resign myself to do so until such time as the suffering shall cease. I have already told you that only two great events have any place in my future: one is happiness, the other is neither happiness nor misery. In either case, I shall no longer suffer.

These are serious and solemn thoughts upon which I often reflect, but which I make the subject of our conversation with reluctance, because they are only ideas, and ideas, so long as they are not put into

action, are a more or less sonorous assemblage of words. Some day my last, most exquisite hope, that of being yours, will either vanish or be fulfilled; in either case you will read these lines again, and you will then be able to judge whether I have spoken truly or falsely. It is in this conviction that I write them.

I see that I am digressing at each moment from the subject of your letter. I am grateful to you, my Adèle, for communicating to me the distress occasioned you by unkind reports repeated with no less malice than foolishness. They only serve to show me more plainly that if you think it right for me to continue to see you, I must use my utmost efforts to hasten the longed-for day of our marriage. This would in itself be enough to supply a stimulus to exertion, even if my own impatience was not far more than sufficient. Alas! is it possible to desire this happiness more ardently than I do?

If it is within my power to hasten the longed-for moment by abstaining from all unworthy action, I shall have a strong motive for restraint. There are moments, my Adèle, when I feel myself capable of stooping to anything which would enable me to reach this wished-for end more quickly; and then I recover myself, shocked at my own thoughts, and I ask myself whether I should indeed really attain my goal if I reached it by a road unworthy of my better self. Dear love, the position of a young man, independent by his principles, his affections, and his desires, who is nevertheless dependent upon others by reason of his age and of his lack of fortune, is a

cruel one. Yes, if I come out of this experience as pure as I entered into it, I shall feel that I am entitled to some measure of self-esteem.

There are many annoyances that I am forced to disregard, for I am obliged to work in spite of continual agitation. Those persons are greatly mistaken who think that among my aims there is a wish for glory, for celebrity, or for any of the trivialities with which it is possible to fill a life that is empty of love.

Consider all my words, Adèle, for you will find in them an overpowering affection; and if you love me in return, you will find in them also a source of gladness. I sometimes envy you, in that you are beloved as you are by me. As for you, you love me VERY MUCH, and that is all.

For what reason can your parents be opposed to our intercourse, when they intend, as they have done hitherto, that their daughter shall be my wife? I am aware that they would prefer to have my father's consent; in many respects they are right in this matter, and I will do everything to satisfy them. It certainly will not be I, the most impatient of men, who will preach patience. All my life was settled at Dreux. Some day I will give you an account of that journey to Dreux. You will see then how I have always loved you, even when I believed myself forgotten.

Adieu, dearest love; I embrace thee tenderly.

VICTOR.

This letter is very grave, my own Adèle, and,

therefore, I add one line to tell you, and to repeat to you, how much I love you.

THE SAME NIGHT.

This letter is very important, Adèle; for the impression that it makes upon you will decide all our happiness. I am about to make an effort to collect some calm ideas, and I shall have no difficulty in contending with sleep to-night. I am going to have a serious and intimate conversation with you, and I wish earnestly that it could be face to face, for then I could at once receive your answer (which I shall expect with the utmost impatience), and I should be able to observe in your countenance the effect that my words may produce upon you—that effect which will decide the happiness of us both.

There is one word, Adèle, which we seem, up to the present moment, to be afraid to pronounce. It is the word *love;* and yet the feeling that I experience for you is undoubtedly genuine *love.* It is of importance now to ascertain whether the sentiment that animates you is likewise *love.*

Listen! There is within us an immaterial being, in exile, as it were, within our bodies, which will survive to all eternity. This being, which is the essence of all in us that is best and purest, is the soul. It is the soul that is the source of all enthusiasm and all affection, and upon it depend our conceptions of God and of heaven.

I am treating of matters beyond our knowledge, because it is necessary to do so in order to make myself fully understood; but, lest this talk should

strike you as unusual, let us speak of things which require only simple but elevated language. To continue. The soul, being superior to the body, with which it is united, would remain on earth in an unbearable isolation, were it not that it is permitted to choose among other human souls a companion with whom it may share the misfortunes of life and the happiness of eternity. When two souls, which for a longer or a shorter time have sought each other amidst the crowd, at length find each other; when they perceive that they belong to each other; when, in short, they comprehend their affinity, then there is established between them a union, pure and ardent as themselves, a union begun upon earth in order that it may be completed in heaven. This union is *love;* real and perfect love, such love as very few men can adequately conceive; love which is a religion, adoring the being beloved as a divinity; love that lives in devotion and ardor, and for which to make great sacrifices is the purest pleasure. It is such love as this that you inspire in me, and it is such love that you will some day assuredly feel for me, even though, to my ever-present grief, you do not do so now. Your soul is formed to love with the purity and ardor of the angels, but it may be that only an angel can inspire it with love, and when I think this I tremble.

The world, Adèle, does not understand this kind of affection, for it is the appointed lot only of those who are singled out either for happiness or misery; like yourself, in the former instance, or, in the latter, like me. Love, in the eyes of the world, is either a car-

nal appetite or a vague fancy, which possession extinguishes or absence destroys. That is why it is commonly said, with a strange abuse of words, that passion does not endure. Alas! Adèle, do you know that *passion* means *suffering?* And do you seriously believe that there is any suffering in the ordinary love of men, so violent in appearance, so feeble in reality? No; immaterial love is eternal, because that part of our being which experiences it cannot die. It is our souls that love, and not our bodies.

Notice here, however, that nothing should be pushed to an extreme. I do not intend to say that the body has no place in this, the first of our affections. A gracious God perceived that without an intimate personal union the union of souls could never be made perfect, because two persons who love each other must spend their lives in a community of thought and action. This is, therefore, one of the ends for which God has established that attraction of one sex towards another which, in itself, shows that marriage is divine. Thus it is that in youth personal union serves to ratify the union of souls, and it is our souls, in their turn, which, being ever young and indestructible, maintain the union of persons in their old age and perpetuate it after death.

Do not be alarmed, then, Adèle, in regard to the duration of a passion which it is not within the power of God Himself to extinguish. It is this profound and enduring affection that I feel for you; it is not based on personal charms, but on moral qualities, and it is an affection that leads to heaven or to hell,

and which fills life, the whole of life, with delight or with misery.

I have laid bare my soul to you; I have spoken a language that I speak only to those who can understand it. Inquire of yourself, in your turn; ascertain if love expresses for you what it does for me; find out whether your soul is really a sister soul to mine. Do not pause to consider what is said by a foolish world, or what is thought by the little minds that surround you; search your own heart, and listen to its voice. If the thoughts expressed in this letter are real to you, if the affection that you entertain for me is indeed of the same nature as that which I feel for you, my Adèle, then, indeed, I am thine for life, thine for eternity. If you fail to understand my love, if I seem to you extravagant, then adieu. Nothing but death will be left to me, and death will have no terrors when I have no longer any hope upon earth. Do not imagine, however, that I should take my own life without regard to others; so long as there are the stricken to heal, and sacred combats to sustain, suicide is the act of an egoist and a coward. I shall take care that the sacrifice of my life shall be as useful to others as it will be sweet to myself.

These thoughts, perhaps, seem to you a little gloomy, addressed as they are to one for whom my lips have always worn a smile, to one who does not know the tenor of my habitual reflections.

Adèle, I tremble in saying so, but I believe that you do not love me with such love as I offer you, and only a love such as that can satisfy me. If

you loved me thus, could you keep asking me, as you do, if I have confidence in your conduct? You do this so lightly that it seems to me to indicate indifference. Yet you are offended at the most natural questions, and you ask me whether I am under any apprehension that your conduct is blamable. If you loved me as I love you, Adèle, you would understand that there are a thousand things that may be done without criminality, even without real error, which, nevertheless, are of a nature to alarm the sensitive jealousy of my affection. Such love as I have described to you is exclusive. I myself wish for nothing, not even a glance, from any other woman in the world; but I desire that no man should dare to claim anything from the woman who is mine. If I desire her alone, it is because I wish for her wholly and entirely. A glance, a smile, a kiss from you are my greatest happiness; do you really believe that I can patiently endure to see them bestowed on some one else as well? Does this sensitiveness alarm you? If you loved me, it would delight you. Why do you not feel thus towards me?

Love is jealous, and ingenious in self-torture in proportion as it is pure and intense. I have always found it so. Some years ago, I remember, I shuddered instinctively when your little brother, who was then a mere child, chanced to pass the night with you. Age, experience, observation of the world, have only confirmed this disposition in me. It will be my undoing, Adèle, for I perceive that, while it ought to increase your happiness, it does but render you uneasy.

Speak without constraint. Make it plain whether you wish me to be such as I am or no. My future, as well as yours, depends upon this, and while my fate is nothing to me, yours is everything. Remember that, if you do not love me, there is a sure and speedy way of releasing yourself from me; you have only to agree to it. I shall not oppose you. There is one kind of absence, thanks to which we are soon forgotten by those who regard us with indifference. It is an absence from which there is no return.

One word more. If this long letter seems to you sad and depressed, do not be astonished; your own was so cold. You are of opinion that between us *passion is out of place!* Adèle, . . . I read over again some old letters of yours, in the hope of consolation, but the difference between the old and the new was so great that in place of being consoled . . . Adieu.

FRIDAY, *October 26th.*

Your little note, my Adèle, occasioned me a joy which I will not try to describe. When it is a long time since I have seen you, as it is to-day, I am sad, cast down, indifferent to everything, oppressed by all things. But now, it is only necessary for me to read again your charming note, which I already know by heart, to feel almost happy. Yes, my dearest Adèle, your own assurance is all that is needed for me to believe that you love me as I love you; you are incapable of deceiving either yourself or me. It does not cause me a moment's astonishment that you have at once understood such unconventional

opinions as I wrote you regarding the things of this world. How should you not understand them, you who were created on purpose to inspire them and to call them into existence? There is nothing generous, chaste, or noble to which your soul can be insensible; for it is itself the essence of all that is noble, generous, and chaste. Dear Adèle, these words are not the commonplace flatteries with which the deceitfulness of men so often abuses the vanity of women; do not let us sink, either of us, to such conditions. It is a profound appreciation of your worth alone which moves me to speak thus to you, and the only defect of which I am conscious in you is ignorance of your own angelic nature. I earnestly wish that you could fully recognize the dignity of your own character, and that you would bear yourself more proudly among those women, vulgar at their best, who have the honor to approach you, and who seem to abuse your excessive humility, even to the extent of believing themselves to be your equals, if not, indeed, your superiors. It is needless to discuss this at length, but you must believe, my Adèle, that no one in the world is your superior, and that you confer a favor upon all other women by condescending to treat them as your equals.

It is right to despise perishable advantages, such as beauty, rank, fortune, etc.; but in the same measure that we do this, we should respect in ourselves the imperishable gifts of the soul. They are so rare. Vanity is as contemptible and unreasonable as proper pride is just and useful. The latter is in

no sense external; it does not injure others; on the contrary, it creates a sort of pity, which inspires us with kindly feelings. It elevates the soul in such wise as to render it inaccessible to all aspirations for rank or fame. When one's thoughts are wholly occupied with an eternity of love and happiness, one regards all the things of this earth from a height at which they seem very insignificant. One accepts prosperity with calmness, one confronts misfortune with serenity, because all such things pass away, and are, as it were, only accessaries of a union which remains.

It is this union, my adored Adèle, which exists between us, and it would be impossible for you to comprehend the intoxication, the delirium, with which I look forward to the day when that union, ratified in public, will permit me to possess you altogether, and to belong entirely to you. Oh! my Adèle, my wife, what does it not mean, even now, to be able to speak of this immense happiness, to form enchanting projects for the future, to dwell together in hope, to—oh, God! in the presence of that future what are all the troubles of the present time?

Adieu; I embrace thee tenderly.

THY HUSBAND FOR ETERNITY.

I have just read your letter, and I add a word more, my Adèle, to thank you for it. How much happiness I owe you! Yet, why are your letters always so short? You complain of continual preoccupation; if it were otherwise, my Adèle, you would not love me. Are you aware that in the long eighteen

months in which I did not see you I did not pass a moment without thinking of you? Do you realize that you are my end and aim in all I do, and that without that aim I should do nothing? Whenever I am called upon to endure mental grief or physical suffering, I represent to myself that it is in honor of you, or for love of you. And then everything seems sweet to me. What matters all else if my dearest Adèle *is only gracious enough to love me?* Whenever this becomes her only occupation, I shall be the happiest of men.

SATURDAY, *November* 24, 1821.

I stand in need of a lively faith, Adèle, to enable me to believe that this correspondence does not weary you. This is the last time that so long a letter shall follow so short a note. Beneath the reasons that you give me I have discovered another, which they are intended to conceal; it is the effort experienced in writing of which you ought to complain rather than the difficulties which prevent you from doing so; then you would at least be sincere. You appear to attach importance to relinquishing a visit. I do not feel, Adèle, that this kind of loss involves any sacrifice. I never dreamed up to this moment of boasting of all the sacrifices in this respect which I make daily in order to see you or to write to you. It is true, however, that if I have not enumerated them, it was because they cost me nothing. . . .

My Adèle, I have just read over the beginning of this letter, and I am dissatisfied with it, because

I fear that it will occasion dissatisfaction to you. It is impossible for me to remain long out of humor with you, even when I am in the right. I am ready, therefore, dear Adèle, to ask your pardon for having found fault with you. Nevertheless, have I not a legitimate cause for complaint? Adèle, I do not ask you, since you have only brief periods of leisure, to write me long letters all at once; but it is impossible that you should not find time each day to write at least a page, so that at the end of several days your letters would be of a satisfactory length, without fatigue to yourself. I make this suggestion to you in good faith, because I believe that you seek it in the same spirit. No, dear love, I, who have so much pleasure in writing to you, cannot believe that what is so sweet to me is wearisome to you, or that what makes me so happy you find a burden. That would be a proof that you do not love me, and I will never willingly admit such an idea. I am in so much need of loving and of believing myself loved. Forgive me, out of your kindness, for the first lines of this letter. Remember that a doubt in regard to your affection tortures me much more than it can distress you. If you realized how much the slightest alarm causes me to suffer, you would avoid giving occasion for it, were it only from pity. Let us grant pardon to each other, then, and do thou embrace me.

I obey you, my dearest Adèle, and I do not work at night. This morning I rose early in order to write to you. Thursday evening, when I returned, I was tempted to sit up in order to tell you all that was in

my heart. It would be impossible for you to imagine what an indefinable effect that sight of you produced upon me; to find you still up and expecting us at nearly midnight occasioned me at one and the same moment the liveliest pleasure and the keenest pain. On the one hand, the sight of you was sufficient in itself to make me perfectly happy, but it surprised me the more deliciously because I could not help believing that it was, perhaps, a little for my sake that you had resigned yourself to so late a vigil. On the other hand, the idea of my poor Adèle wearying herself in solitude, while I was supposed to be amusing myself, filled me with remorse. I thought that you might have been ill, that you in your turn might have suffered, even that you might have been cold.

Dear love, I reproach myself for the moments spent at the café, because they were so many moments of sadness to you. I longed to compensate for those moments with ten years of my life, and when I was forced to leave you so soon, without being able to thank you, or to inform myself as to your suffering, and without being able to press you to my heart, then, Adèle, it seemed to me that we were violently parted; and for the thousandth time I cursed the obstacles which separate me from my wife, from her who belongs to me. I am your husband, and yet I was obliged to part from you without an embrace, without a word; and if I should die to-morrow, Adèle, another would obtain all that is denied to me, another would possess those rights which I am forbidden to enjoy, another . . . It

seems to me that this unbearable idea would make my blood boil in my veins after death.

It is not likely that such a thing will come to pass; but who can foresee the future? On what does life depend? Let but some man tread on my foot, or look at me insultingly, to-day, and who knows where I shall be to-morrow? If I considered only myself I should assuredly cling very little to a life at once widowed and orphaned. But when the remembrance of you returns to me with hope, Adèle, then I freely admit that I fear death. It would be horrible to me to die without having possessed you, without having belonged to you. I ought, perhaps, to conceal my lack of courage; it is the correct thing to despise one's life; but to lose life would be to lose you, and it would be as sweet to me to follow you into a better world as it would be terrible to me to leave this one without having possessed you.

I do not know what I write; I am oppressed by gloomy thoughts, the cause of which I do not understand. Do not be surprised at this. There is a certain frame of mind in which a vague sadness overpowers us, a sadness that the soul does not comprehend, and against which it has no protection. The remembrance of past misfortunes, or the presentiment of evils to come, is as the smoke of a fire that has just been extinguished, or is on the point of bursting into flames. These remembrances and these forebodings pass like clouds between us and our ideas; they assume the undefined forms of the future or of the past; for in the world of imagination, as in the world of reality, all that is distant is

vague. The soul believes itself to be suffering, and it is so indeed. All its joyous imaginations fade away; all sad impressions are intensified. But let happiness on a sudden reappear, the clouds disperse, all things are restored to their true shape and color, and we are surprised at our own depression.

This is what will happen to me on the day that I see you again. I shall no longer think of anything but the happiness of being near you, and the hope of being some day altogether yours.

But, Adèle, you are frightened, you say, at the idea of *marrying so young a man ;* you fear that I shall *some day repent having engaged myself*, etc., etc. It distresses me to repeat these cruel expressions. I do not believe I have ever given you cause to think me inconstant. You say that you cannot hope to restore me all that I have lost. Reflect a little, Adèle, and ask yourself if you really think you are not sure of being everything to me. It is you alone who can give me back what I have lost, but you will restore me all, and more than all. . . .

That last expression escaped me, and I ought perhaps to withdraw it; but it is only the truth that love such as I feel for you is greater than all other affections, and that a wife is more even than a mother.

Alas! am I right to say all this? But why should I hide from you any one of my thoughts? God knows that no mother has ever been beloved as I have loved my own noble mother; God knows, also, that no wife has ever been adored as I adore mine.

I sometimes fear, my dearest, that you have not wholly pardoned my mother's memory. I wish that

you had known her; I wish that she could have known you. For a long time she caused me great unhappiness, because she carried to an extreme her desire to see me happy. Her only fault lay in her failure to understand and to appreciate the beauty of your character; but she was, nevertheless, entirely worthy to understand it. Ah! why is she lost to me and to you? Some day, perhaps, we shall all be united. My prolonged grief, my deep depression, had begun to move her; she had perceived that everything else failed to interest me, and she would certainly not have refused me the only happiness that life had to offer me. Moreover, her reluctance to my marriage was wholly independent of your personality, and she had too much respect for her son not to esteem highly the person to whom he was so deeply and so firmly attached. Some day we shall be happy with her; in the meanwhile our faith in the eternal remains with us. . . . I will not finish what I have just written. It is sweet to me to speak of my mother to my wife, but it is profoundly sad.

I have, however, many things still to say to you. My dearest Adèle, your distraction in prayer does not in the least *amuse me,* but it has touched me very much, and it renders me happy and thankful. Sometimes I venture to imagine that I am everything to you, and then my heart is filled with a royal pride and an angelic felicity. All that you feel, I myself experience, and this continual distraction, which only makes us more in sympathy, compensates me for everything else. All my life

is one long prayer on your behalf. I pray for the welfare of her in whom my own welfare is bound up.

Adieu, my adored Adèle; think of your husband, and remember that I stand in need of a long answer. Forgive me for the first part of this letter in consideration of its close. Adieu; tell me in detail of your health. I embrace thee tenderly.

THINE FAITHFULLY.

FRIDAY, *December 7th.*

You see that I am faithful to my promise, Adèle, and it is, indeed, no effort to me to be so; for when I have not seen you for four days, what can give me greater pleasure than employing myself in writing to you? I have very little idea of what I am going to write. I can only express myself when I see you, and when I write to you I do not see you. In your absence all my thoughts are sad, and if I wish to relieve myself from the present that oppresses me, I am obliged to transport myself in memory to the last time that I saw you, or else in hope to the next time that I shall see you again. I recall what you said to me, how you smiled at me, and I endeavor not to complain when I imagine how you will speak to me and smile at me once more.

In spite of all this, dear love, you cannot imagine the multitude of cares that assail me. Aside from my own sorrows and my domestic annoyances, I am forced to endure all the vexations of literary spite. I do not know what evil genius drove me into a career in which every step is hindered by some secret enmity or some base rivalry. This is pitiable, and

it makes me feel shame for the profession of letters. It is discouraging to awake each morning exposed to the paltry attacks of a mob of enemies, whom one has never done anything to injure, and whom, indeed, for the most part one has never seen. I should like to inspire you with a respect for this great and noble profession of letters, but I am constrained to admit that it affords a singular study in the various forms of human baseness. It is, as it were, a great slough, into which one must descend, unless, indeed, one has wings by which one is enabled to rise above its mire. I myself do not possess these pinions, but I am a man apart—isolated by an inflexible character and incorruptible principles—and I am sometimes tempted to laugh at all the little traps that are laid for me; but more often, to the shame of my philosophy be it spoken, I am moved to anger. You will perhaps think, dear Adèle, and with some show of reason, that I ought to be insensible to such trivialities, in the presence of the important interests that occupy me; but my present irritable condition is exactly what renders them unbearable. Things which would be but a passing annoyance, if I were happy, are just now unendurable; I really suffer when these miserable insects come and light upon my wounds. Do not let us discuss them further; it is treating them with too much consideration; they are not worth the pen that I waste or the paper that I spoil in speaking of them.

SATURDAY, *December 8th.*

You have reason to scold me, dear love; I have been almost stupefied the entire week, preoccupied

as I was by the remembrance of that delightful evening spent with you at the ball. I say delightful, notwithstanding that I was very jealous, and very much exasperated. I wish you would dress as you were then dressed, only for me. You see how extravagant I am, but do not laugh at it, for if you laugh, it will be an acknowledgment that you do not love me as I love you. When I see your beauty so adorned for others, I lose my head, and I could not give you any idea what infernal emotions I go through. I am so insignificant beside all those young men who dance so well! On the other hand, there is so much nobleness and simplicity in your character, that it reassures me against the coquetry which your mirror might inspire, and beauty is so great a gift when modesty and beauty are united; you are so charming in your grace and innocence. Ah, my adored Adèle, I entreat you preserve always that angelic virtue without which the dignity of the soul and the chastity of love are forever lost! Remember that you are my type of perfection upon earth, that it is you who have fulfilled the ideal of womanly virtue that my highest imagination can create, and that in you I find realized the companion of my life as she was first revealed to me in the dreams of my youth. These are not idle words. Consider what an influence you have exercised over me ever since I have known you; think of what I have done, of what I do now, of what I shall always do to keep myself worthy of you in the longed-for day of our marriage, and you will see how high a place you occupy in my esteem and affection.

My adored Adèle, when I transport myself in memory to those short moments, during our return from the ball, in which I held you in my arms, I am beside myself. Why must I be separated from you? What would it matter to the whole world if your entire life expended itself thus in my arms? What harm did we commit? Adèle, explain to me, I beg you, how I could have done wrong in holding my wife to my heart? Why should these moments end? And why should a man, who has two arms and a will of his own, allow such moments to be snatched from him? Who knows if they will ever return? And what human power can restore a lost happiness? . . .

I perceive that I am wandering. Have pity on my folly, you who constitute all my happiness and all my joy. *Adieu,* adieu; I am but a simpleton. Pity me, and love me; my soul, my heart, my life, all is thine. I embrace thee.

THY HUSBAND.

You see that I have written you at length, more so even than you asked. If this pleases you, you can give me a proof of it by writing to me at the same length in your turn. Adieu, adieu. I do not know whether you will be able to read what I have written.

SATURDAY, *December 8th, Midnight.*

I have just read your letter; it has moved me profoundly, and, as I hope to see you to-morrow, I feel the need of answering it at once. Pardon me, dear Adèle, if, in order to do this, I begin by disobeying you. I promise you that this shall be the last time.

If my habit of working at night is displeasing to you, that is cause for me to abandon it. Moreover, your reasons are good, and if my Adèle deigns to take an interest in my health, that is enough to render it precious to me. Work done at night is exhausting; but the enforced idleness of sleeplessness is little less fatiguing. But, since you wish it, I will try again to sleep as much as possible; all the more easily because my sleeping moments are those in which I am happiest, for they are always filled by delightful dreams which bear me to your side. Ah! when will this happiness be something more than a dream? I promise you, then, Adèle, to work no more at night, except in extraordinary cases. I should be guilty of infringing upon this promise, at the very moment I make it, were it not that writing to you is not *work*.

You are afraid, then, Adèle, that I enjoy only society, and that, therefore, my domestic life will some day be burdensome to me. You do not reflect, my beloved Adèle, that when my domestic life is filled by you, all my happiness will be centred in it. What can be more attractive to me than to pass all my hours of pleasure, of repose, or of labor, beside my wife? Dear love, ought I to be forced to repeat this for the hundredth time?

But at present, what a difference! What is there to attach me to my own home, where, to the weariness of solitude, are added memories of very recent sorrow? It is just because I have once enjoyed the sweetness of family life, my Adèle, that this house is now so mournful to me. What domestic life is

possible to an unmarried man who is an orphan? For I am an orphan, and perhaps I am even more to be pitied than if I were so altogether.

You see, dear love, that if you give me your confidence, mine is entirely yours; there are no recesses in my heart that are not known to you; and, if it please God, there shall never be anything secret in my life of which you are in ignorance; for be very sure that all my secrets will be always of a nature to be known to you.

On the other hand, you are very much mistaken if you think that a society life could please me more than a domestic life, even if the latter were very little attractive. On the contrary, although my own room does, indeed, seem sad, the streets and the *salons* are hateful to me. I flee from all distractions; I abhor *les plaisirs*. The life of a single man is altogether odious to me; it means isolation, both at home and abroad. I long only for the happiness of a home, for the pleasures of family ties; and whenever that longed-for time comes, I shall have nothing to wish for, dear love, if our own circle contains as much happiness for you as for me.

You would not be alarmed if you knew how my *liberty* oppresses me, and with what impatience I await the time when a sweet bondage shall unite my days to yours. In the meantime, except for the brief and happy moments that I spend with you, all my hours are equally odious to me, even more, perhaps, when I am in company than when I am alone. Alone, I can at least think of you undisturbed.

I do not like to give my attention to any one beside yourself in these letters, Adèle. An intercourse so intimate and so sacred ought not to be interrupted by the affairs of others. Yet it seems necessary to speak of your uncle and your aunt. I find myself unable to like either the one or the other. Your aunt's remarks, in particular, are singularly displeasing to me. I fail to see in what respect our conduct is unusual in the eyes of the world, nor do I understand why any one should criticise the privilege that I enjoy of passing a couple of hours each week in your society. Does it seem to be necessary, then, that our too brief interviews should be devoted to the entertainment of outsiders, and that I must make myself agreeable to some indifferent person, while some one else does the same to you? This is, on the face of it, foolish in the extreme, unless, indeed, I am permitted to see you more often, at times when no one intrudes upon us, if such a course is insisted upon for the days that you receive. Even then this prescribed etiquette is absurd. I am no longer a child. I have seen the world, and I honestly believe myself to be exceedingly reserved. I am, and I wish to be, uninteresting and dull, in fact, a nonentity, for the world at large, because you are the only person for whom I am able to expend all my faculties of thought and emotion. In the same measure that I am ardent and expansive to you, I am cold and silent to others. If I am forced to assume this *rôle* towards my own wife, nobody will be the gainer by it; I myself shall certainly be less agreeable, and the effort involved will be really painful to me. Remember, dear Adèle,

that for a month I have seen you every other day, and in a delightful intimacy. Do you think this habit so easy to lose? But they pretend that I am doing you an injury. Such words as these reduce me to silence, but they impair my very existence.

Dear Adèle, continue, I entreat you, to share all your interests with me. You do not know in what a touching manner these proofs of your confidence affect me. It is sweet to me to read your beautiful soul, to study your noble heart. No *kindness of heart* is necessary, dear love, for me to tell you—and to tell you with delight—my true opinion of you. I cannot admit that I could feel more love for a young girl whose conduct was different from yours, for I cannot conceive of a love more ardent than mine for you; neither can I imagine any conduct more admirable than yours; and if I were to *hear of some one* who acted in all respects as you do, I should kiss the ground under her feet.

Adieu, my beloved Adèle; adieu, my wife. I embrace you with reverence. Tell me of your health. I would that I could preserve it at the expense of my own, or of my life itself.

TUESDAY, *December 11th*, 9.30 P.M.

It is impossible, my Adèle, for me to seek sleep before having answered you. Oh, no! you are not *to blame*, for you could never think for one moment that I am capable of changing; Adèle, you could never even dream it. I can only believe that dreams themselves, in this respect, must tell us lies. *I* forget you! *I* cease to love you, to adore you, to idolize you

unceasingly! My darling, such an idea did not find a resting-place, even for a moment, in your mind? Is it not so? Your Victor would feel the most profound distress if such a suspicion ever . . . But no, it cannot be, and I am mad to defend myself from such a reproach. To tell me that I can ever cease to love you is to tell me that I have no soul, and that there is no God. And what other human creature would then be worthy of a man who had been once honored by your love? Could he, to whom you had graciously inclined, stoop in his turn to a mere woman of fashion? And if you, a pure and heavenly minded young girl, cherish some esteem for this man who is yet so unworthy of you, for this Victor who is so honored in being your husband, how can you doubt for a moment that it would be his greatest happiness to sacrifice a thousand lives, and, if it were possible, a thousand eternities, for a single one of your glances?

Oh, my Adèle, what being upon earth can offer you a devotion equal to mine? Are not all my words, all my thoughts, all my devotions addressed to you? Have I ever experienced a joy which did not come from you? Have you not been a sharer in all my sorrows? Are you not my soul, my life, my heaven? Alas! I see God himself in you; I love him in you, because I can see and love no other thing than you. It may be that these are blasphemies; but forgive me! It cannot be an offence towards God to adore one of His angels. He would not have created you so perfect if he had not intended that the man who gives you his life might forget Him sometimes to think only of you.

Adieu for this evening, my adored Adèle. Why cannot I say to you all that oppresses my heart? Why cannot I find words to express my love? Adieu; sleep well. I embrace thee, and I embrace thee yet again.

WEDNESDAY, *December 12th*, 4.15 P.M.

Oh! how the time lags until I shall be your husband in the sight of all! They torment you, they distress you, and yet I have not the right to snatch you away from suffering, to protect you from tyranny! This expression is not too strong, Adèle. On the contrary, it is very feeble. Those persons who act towards *you*—the sweetest and most lovable of human beings—as they do, must have a self-conceit which is incomprehensible to me. My Adèle, do not fancy I am again exaggerating. These are simple truths drawn from the deepest recesses of my heart. You must recognize them as such, in spite of your humility and your submissive spirit.

Dear love, I would not in any way lessen your respect and affection for your parents. In your husband's eyes, that respect and that affection are among your most appealing charms. Nevertheless, I wish that you could learn to resist unjust vexations, and that you would not allow yourself to be sacrificed so quietly to opinions which to me are inexplicable.

Great heavens! why am I not already your husband? No matter; I am so in your eyes, and in the sight of God. I am your protector, your support. Rely upon me, my dearest. Who should raise his voice in your behalf, if not your Victor? Ah, yes! rely always upon me; be very sure that

this support at least will never fail you. My own happiness, my own repose, are not the object of my life; it is your repose and your happiness which it is incumbent on me to secure at the cost of any sacrifice, to preserve by every kind of devotion. You are weak, but I am strong, and all my strength is for you. Yes, I am yours entirely; all that is in me belongs to you, both that which is earthly and that which is immortal.

Adieu, my adored Adèle; adieu, my wife. I embrace thee most tenderly.

SUNDAY, *December 16th.*

My last words yesterday were: *Sleep well.* Yours were: *Adieu, Monsieur Victor.* But to-day I write to you, to-day I am ready to throw myself at your feet, to accuse myself of everything, to ask pardon of you for all the faults that I have undoubtedly, but unconsciously, committed. You will not find in this letter, my adored Adèle, anything that resembles a reproach or a recrimination. You were suffering yesterday evening. I was undoubtedly in the wrong, and I alone. I should have liked to write you a letter that very night, in which I should have related to you some proofs of attachment which I have given you, and of which you are in ignorance, in order to show you that if signs of indifference during unhappiness have been shown by one of us to the other, it is not I who have done so. Yesterday you brought a very grave accusation against me. It may have been a little thoughtless. *I laughed, while you wept!* My Adèle, I will not give vent to angry explanations;

I will impose silence on all that rises within me in revolt against such an accusation. Since you were ill, I will submit to your punishing me for an involuntary error as if it were a premeditated injury. Dear love, I will confine myself to assuring you that I did not see you weep, that I was in ignorance of your distress, and that I do not even now understand its cause.

My Adèle, I want to repeat to you how I love you, even at the very moment that I suffer, through you, and for you. I hope to see you to-day at church. You will find me in every respect the same as if you had yesterday bidden me a tender and loving adieu. Forgive, forgive me, for you are gentle, kind, and generous, and I am none of these things.

My adored Adèle, may I embrace you here?

YOUR FAITHFUL AND GRATEFUL HUSBAND.

Dear love, I ask nothing of you, not even an embrace, nor a smile, nor a glance. All I desire is that you should no longer suffer, and that you should no longer be angry with your Victor.

MONDAY, *December 17th.*

My beloved Adèle, I must throw myself at your feet to sue for pardon. If you knew how deeply I repent of having disobeyed you yesterday! I came away much dissatisfied with myself, because, in spite of your sweet and gracious words, I had not read my pardon in your face. You were right, and doubly right. I will not tell you, dear love, that you were angry for a trifle, because I do not consider it so. It is not the subject of the disobedience, but the dis-

obedience itself, which is of importance. I know that in your place I should have been extremely displeased, and I will not disguise from myself that I should not, perhaps, have been as sweet-tempered about it as you were. It is written in your destiny, my good and generous Adèle, that you should surpass me in everything except, indeed, in the love that I bear you. Dear love, I have been to blame only through thoughtlessness; but a thoughtlessness that is a source of distress to you is very blamable. Forgive me, oh, forgive me! I have thought of nothing since yesterday but the pain that I have caused you. I cannot understand how it is that I, who would not willingly occasion you the slightest annoyance, should have been guilty of distressing you so much, without any object, and purely from carelessness.

Adieu, adieu. I adore you because you are an angel, and I embrace you because you are my wife.

FRIDAY, *December 21st.*

Adèle, there is an insupportable idea from which I wish to escape, but which has constantly returned to beset me, ever since the last time I saw you, four days ago.

Great heavens! suppose that our marriage should ever result in your unhappiness! . . . Adèle, do you realize the extent of my jealousy? Did you sufficiently consider all its exactions, and my excitability, before deciding to unite your life with mine? I should not know how to tell you what took place within me when your mother mentioned before me the other day that you had accepted the arm of some man who

is unknown to me. The idea that this favor—in my eyes so immense—had been granted to a stranger; that this privilege of approaching you so nearly, which belongs to me by right only, might every day perhaps be shared by others—this privilege which is so innocent and which fills me with such delight—the very idea of this, I say, altogether overcame me. It still seems to me that you must be indifferent in regard to what occasions me cruel distress. Adèle, this torture, joined to the necessity of keeping a restraint upon myself, threw me into a condition that is difficult to describe. I came away, and ever since then these ideas which possess me have poisoned everything, even the pleasure of thinking of you.

I have examined myself severely, and I find that I do not agree with the opinion commonly expressed that jealousy is ridiculous. I have asked myself if I was to blame, and not only have I found myself unable to condemn my jealous passion, but I am convinced that it is actually a part of the chaste, pure, and exclusive love that I feel for you, but with which I seem unable to inspire you. Dear Adèle, if you do not feel this love, you are at least designed by nature to comprehend it. For this reason I am sure that you will not laugh at what has caused me such exquisite pain. Ah! how happy I should be, if I were beloved in the same measure that I love!

It is evident that I must have a blind confidence in you, dear, thus to unveil before you the most intimate secrets of my soul. If I were speaking to an ordinary person, I should fear that my jealousy would appear only a failing. With you I have no such ap-

prehension. Whatever constitutes my entire happiness naturally cannot be a trifle in my eyes, and it will not surprise you that it is impossible for me to discuss this subject with those who regard it in a trivial light.

Under ordinary circumstances, jealousy is a suspicion insulting to the person who excites it, and degrading to the person who indulges it. Dear love, I do not do you the injustice of supposing that you confound the delicacy of an imperious love, which you are born to inspire, with the coarseness of vulgar minds. My jealousy may be extreme, but it is respectful. I believe that it does me honor, because it proves the purity of my tenderness. If my wife ever gave me cause for jealousy through lightness of conduct, I should die of it, but I should never suspect her for a single moment.

I have spoken at length of all my ideas on this subject, because the matter is of importance. Such jealousy as mine, dear Adèle, ought to give you pleasure. If it frightens you, you do not love me. If you met me, who am a man, giving my arm to a young girl, or to any woman, would it be a matter of indifference to you? Reflect upon this, for if it is really something that you would not care for, I am lost— you do not love me. These are my unvarying sentiments. Love that is not jealous is neither true nor pure. Be very sure that those who are without a feeling of jealousy concerning one woman are in love with them all. My dear, my beloved Adèle, you have once told me that you loved me, and until you tell me to the contrary I intend to believe it; I intend

to cling to this delicious conviction as the only belief that binds me to life.

Adieu. Only a great love for thee could have written the pages that I have just concluded. *A demain.*

SATURDAY, *December 22d.*

I have just read over these two pages. I tremble lest they should strike you as strange. That would prove to me that you neither understand me nor love me. Adèle, dear love! Ah, no! I *will* believe that our souls understand each other, for is it not true? And if it is true, then, my adored Adèle, what happiness is in store for us! Come, let us not be like others who fear to feel, or to express what they feel. Let us be open, we who are innocent and pure. Do not let us hide from each other any of our impressions; let us tell each other all our thoughts, for in this way we shall be safe against those false interpretations that so often destroy confidence, and even affection.

I have sometimes perceived, with pain, Adèle, that you draw back from some of my opinions; but this is because you do not enter into my ideas, and you exaggerate the meaning of my words. I am in ignorance as to whether you esteem me more or less than I deserve; but, for pity's sake, be indulgent to me. Some unknown voice within me tells me that I should lose nothing if you could know me exactly as I am. This testimony of my own conscience is dear to me; it represents—together with the little atom of affection that you grant me—the only comfort I possess. Numerous as my faults are, there is

nothing degrading in them; and, although I know that I am full of imperfections, I know also that you are full of goodness.

Time and paper fail me, and yet how many things I have still to say to you! I talk to you so rarely; I see you so seldom! Dear love, how much I am to be pitied, and how happy are those who are permitted at all times to enjoy your presence, your smile, your words! I am but an exile. When I go to your house everything oppresses me, every one watches me. I am obliged to put a force upon myself, to disguise my own feelings, and there is no one in the world who wears a mask or fetters with more difficulty than I do.

Oh, when will all this end? When shall I attain the unique and immense happiness that the future holds out to me? Excuse this letter, hurriedly written. My ideas are as much disordered as my writing.

SATURDAY, *December*.

Still a few words. I should have answered your preceding letter, my love, but that which you sent me yesterday evening has thrown my whole mind into confusion. I do not know what ideas will fill this paper. The only one which remains clear to me is the same that always possesses me—that of my inexpressible tenderness for you.

I smiled when I read that you imagined you saw around you persons *more worthy than yourself* of being loved as I love you. I conjure you for the thousandth time to do no one the honor of comparison with yourself. You say, Adèle, that some day

I shall become aware of your *lack of knowledge,* and that this will be a disappointment to me. Understand, my dearest, that you possess the rarest and most beautiful kind of knowledge, a knowledge of all the virtues. Yet more, the useless and purely relative accomplishments which you wish to possess would in no wise add to my happiness. Much that we learn is not worth the trouble of learning.

You once told me, with a charming simplicity, that you did not understand poetry; but that is as much as to tell me that you do not comprehend virtue. Adèle, poetry is the soul; genius is the soul; that which people call *my talent* is nothing else than *my soul.* You are, therefore, no stranger to it, dear love; for, if I may venture so to believe, our two souls have never failed up to this time to understand each other. The most ignorant being in the world can feel poetry, that pure poetry of thought to which positive acquirements add nothing whatever; a poetry which weaves its imaginative fancies around living images, which feeds on love, devotion, and enthusiasm, and which reveals to generous natures the most secret mysteries of our souls. Such poetry as this, Adèle, you will always comprehend, because you are good, gentle, noble, and sincere. What matters all else? In the presence of these divine inspirations, these revelations of the ideal, what are the laborious acquirements of men, uncertain and often false as they are? They do but drain the springs of life, while poetry—that poetry which I draw from your look and from your smile—is at once its delight and its consolation. Pardon me; I do

not know whither this subject will lead me, but speaking of poetry is almost the same thing as speaking of yourself.

Yesterday, Adèle, I passed a delightful evening. Let me go over it with you. How sweet it is to pardon one's self when one loves! Adèle, a feeling of remorse remains with me, notwithstanding. You wept! I caused you to weep! Great Heavens, dear love! Oh, forgive me! What would I not give to atone for those tears which you shed in silence beside me, and because of me! Alas! what cause ought you to have had to weep—you who are all my happiness? No, I will not pardon myself, and the more I consider it the more do I feel myself to blame.

But if I have wounded you, my poor, dear love, it is only from excess of affection. I had suffered so much myself in believing that you tolerated me only from politeness, and that my presence was displeasing to you. . . . Oh, tell me that you forgive me, and grant me a smile to console me for those tears.

Adieu, my adored Adèle; you will not tell me that this letter is short. I add some verses,* which I composed for your *fête* during my hours of sadness and depression. I ought not, perhaps, to send them to you, but they bear witness how much I think of you.

Adieu, adieu; write me a long letter, and fill up the lines completely. I embrace you, and I swear to you that you shall not again weep on my account.

YOUR HUSBAND.

* A toi—*Odes et Ballades.*

Sunday, 23d.

What a letter you have written me, Adèle! You yourself seem, in sending it me, to have foreseen and regretted the effect which it might produce upon me. Therefore, I will not complain. I should not, indeed, even answer it, for fear of distressing you by the pain that you have given me, were it not of importance to reassure you, and in so doing to reassure myself as well as you. Moreover, how can my time be better employed than in writing to you? To what greater pleasure, or to what more important duty, can I devote it?

Do you know, *Adèle,* that some words in your letter have completely upset me, and I would have given all the blood in my veins to have had an immediate explanation of them? What was in your mind when you wrote that sentence—that insupportable sentence—in which you seemed to say that *your reputation was not without stain, nor your conscience without reproach?* Speak, oh, speak now! tell your whole thought to him who would give the happiness of his life to procure you a moment's pleasure—a single flash of joy. Do not disguise from me any part of the truth, whatever it may be; you yourself know whether I have ever hidden anything in my soul from you. Listen, I am going to give you an example of the unbounded confidence that you owe me; I am going to tell you what a terrible suspicion, what an intolerable idea, this cruel sentence has caused me. Answer me, my Adèle, my beloved, my adored Adèle, answer me as you would answer God! Have pity on me if some demon of jealousy has,

happily for me, misled me. Consider that I have tossed all night in torturing sleeplessness, sometimes accusing myself of having so easily taken alarm in a matter injurious to you, sometimes seeing suspicions increase and multiply in my heart to the whole extent of my tenderness for you. Speak to me, then, with that sincerity which in your beautiful soul is the inexorable truth. Answer, yes or no, to this question, or else I shall die: *Have you ever at any time loved any man but me?*

Oh, my Adèle, if when you read this sentence your heart cannot restrain its indignation, if in your sincerity and in your anger you answer *no!* then with what joy, with what unutterable delight, I shall kiss the ground under your feet, in thankful recognition of my own senselessness and culpability in having, even for a moment, so completely misunderstood one of your letters, and for having entertained a suspicion of you, the being whom I respect, whom I admire, whom I esteem more than all else in the world. Oh, tell me, my Adèle, it is true, is it not, that you have never loved any man but me?

Alas, God is my witness that ever since my infancy you have been my only thought. However far back I search my memory, I meet with no image but yours. Absent or present, I have loved you always; and it is because I have, from the first, resolved to offer you a worship as pure as yourself, that I have remained impervious to the temptations, the seductions, to which my sex and my age are too often permitted to yield by the immoral indulgence of the world.

When I reflect upon all this, Adèle, and think of all

the chaste and angelic qualities of your nature, I foresee that my alarms are chimerical. Nevertheless, I have told them to you because I ought to tell you everything; and, moreover, if I must own my weakness, I wish that you should be so kind as to reassure me yourself and to answer my question. For, after all, what is this *reproach*, this *stain* of which you speak? Perhaps (and why should I not be as ingenious in reassuring myself as in self-torture?), perhaps it is on my account that your angelic conscience is alarmed, and you believe your reputation to be injured by the attentions I have paid you. If this is so, my dearest Adèle, it will be I, not you, who is to blame. All the fault will be mine, and if one of us is unworthy of the other, it will be myself. How dare you, then, tell me that you desire for me a wife more *worthy* than yourself?

Great Heavens, Adèle! What am I beside you? Oh, I beg you—and I wish you were here, for I should kneel before you as before a divinity—show a little more appreciation of yourself. If you knew how far you are above all others of your sex, if you could see yourself morally, could know, as I do, all the nobleness, all the simplicity, all the greatness of your character, you could not wish me, even in your wildest imagination, any other wife than yourself. It is I, Adèle, who am very far from your standard. All my efforts are devoted to raising myself towards you; and if I have ever seemed ambitious for fame, it was only because my desires habitually turn towards you; if I have ever sought to earn distinction, it was because I thought that you would some day bear my name.

Come, then, believe a little more in yourself. I should like the entire universe to know that I love you, that one look of yours is more precious to me than all the fame in the world, and that I would willingly submit to see all my blood spilled drop by drop if this would spare your eyes one tear. Why is it not within my power to prove to you my devotion by actions instead of words? Ah, you are far above all other women in the realms of virtue and of generosity. Their heads do not even reach your feet. Do not let your conscience reproach you for a kiss or a letter; they are the only comfort enjoyed by your husband in his bereavement and isolation. Fear nothing as regards your reputation; it is dearer to me than my life. I should have to be a miserable coward if it were to cease to be as pure as yourself, and that time will never come.

Adieu. You are to me as my own life.

THY HUSBAND.

MONDAY, *December 24th.*

I should not have promised you not to work yesterday evening, dear Adèle, had it not been that work was impossible to me. How could I, while I was still under the spell of that delightful evening passed at your side, devote my mind and my energies to a labor that would be wholly without interest for me, were it not for the thought that it is only by labor that I can make a position in life worthy of being offered to you? I came back beside myself! What happiness mine will one day be! I retired because I thought that you would retire at the same time.

For a long time I passed in review the most trivial circumstances of those peaceful moments, so brief and so regretted, which were passed near my adored Adèle. For a long time the beloved recollection of you prevented me from sleeping, and when at last sleep came, it restored to me your image, radiant with grace and sweetness.

Dear love, if my heart were laid bare to you, you would find there the thought of you which dominates all other thoughts. Oh, how I love you, and what burning words I need for the expression of my love! I yearn to tell you a thousand times that I love you; I yearn to have you tell me the same thing a thousand times. My whole happiness lies in this. What language of genius or of love can give me words to express all that I feel for you? You are so good, so noble, so generous. All your virtues are depicted so beautifully in your face that I am astonished that all men who see you are not madly in love with you. But then their perception is so dull, their judgment so feeble, their minds so commonplace! Yes, my Adèle, each of the charms of your face reveals one of the perfections of your soul. For your Victor you are an angel, a spirit, a muse, a creature with only so much of human nature as may suffice to keep you within reach of the earthly and material being whose fate and whose lot you deign to share.

Do not smile, dear love, at this enthusiasm. What creature in the world is more worthy than yourself to inspire it? Oh! why do you not see yourself as you are, such as you appear to him whose adored companion you will be eternally! Immortality

would be for my soul a great and dreary desert if I could not advance in it by your side. Yes, my Adèle, it is in union with you that I shall live, in union with you that I shall die, in union with you that I shall enter into eternity. I must pause. Let me go to rest dreaming of happiness. Another time I will think of work and of fame.

THURSDAY, *December* 27, 1821.

I passed a very happy day on Tuesday, Adèle, only embittered in the evening by the thought that you would, perhaps, be blamed for my assiduity in paying attentions to you. Dear love, the idea that you may be called upon to endure the slightest distress on my account, is for me the keenest of all distresses. Nevertheless, I still fail to understand how there can be the slightest harm in what renders me so happy. However that may be, I would sacrifice everything, my dearest Adèle, rather than see you annoyed because of me. When will all these hinderances disappear? When shall I be able to boast, in the face of the whole world, that I love you, you of whom I am so proud, you who represent all my honor and my distinction? Dear Adèle, how happy your Victor, your husband, will be on the day when he can publicly assume that title which, in his eyes, is more distinguished than any other! Ah! we shall some day be very happy.

But we are, or (to speak without presumption) *I* am, very much to be pitied at present. To spend so few hours out of so many days with you, and feel them always harassed by a perpetual effort to suppress what I feel, truly all my other troubles, which

would perhaps seem much greater to an indifferent mind, are nothing to this one. When my friends ask me, as they often do, why it is I am sad and care-worn, they are very far from suspecting the real cause of my sadness.

But, Adèle, you love me, and my imagination can conceive of no misfortune so terrible that it could not be consoled by this thought. It is sufficient to transport me at once from depression to exaltation. So long as I can feel that I have a life to devote to you, I shall never complain of my lot. My dearest love, has not your slave two hands with which to create your happiness? Oh, I beg of you, love me, and have no fears for the future. Let us go forward with faithful hearts and smiling faces. Teach me, you who are the noblest of creatures created in God's image, teach me your angelic virtues, for I am nothing except through you. If I am able to unfold my past life to you without shame, is it not owing to you, Adèle, that I can do so? If there is no remorse to-day among all my sorrows, am I not indebted for this to the protecting influence of your nature upon mine? How much I ought to love you, you who have preserved me in every way, who will protect me through everything! How I do love you, you to whom I owe even the ability to love you in a manner worthy of yourself! Only love me a little, as well; then no misfortune can be of any moment.

FRIDAY, *December 28th.*

It is just two years ago to-day, my dearest Adèle, since I passed an intoxicating evening, the remem-

brance of which will always remain among my sweetest memories. We went together for the first time to the play.

It was at the *Théâtre Français*, do you remember? They gave "Hamlet." Tell me, dear love, have you preserved any remembrance of that delightful evening? Do you recall that we waited a long time for your brother in the street near the theatre, and that you told me *women were more loving than men?* Do you remember that during the whole performance your arm rested lightly upon mine? That I spoke to you of an unhappiness that was imminent, and which, in truth, was not long delayed? That I told you a great many times that so happy an evening would not occur again for a long time? . . .

Oh, my Adèle, when I think that two years have passed since those delicious moments, and that the smallest circumstances connected with them are like those of yesterday in my heart, I ask myself whether it is the same with you, if your memory has been as faithful as mine, and I tremble in asking it, for it would be presumption to believe it; and yet, if you have forgotten all this, you do not love me. Oh, tell me that you have not forgotten; tell me, I pray you, that you have sometimes, during my long absence, thought with regret of those moments that were so quickly flown. . . .

Dear Adèle, how many times I thought of that time when I was in despair. But of what moment is that painful experience now, since you at last belong to me, belong to me at least in hope, and in the future. Who would dare, now that you are mine, to tear you

from me? Alas! two years ago I sat beside you, peaceful and serene, and four months later I was obliged to bow my head under the most terrible of all misfortunes; I was forcibly separated from you! Now, if I see you with more restraint and less ease than formerly, it is, at least, with more security. For nothing but hell itself will prevent your, sooner or later, being mine.

My own fate is very simple; I have only two objects in perspective, yourself and death. Nothing can deprive me of my Adèle. Family ties and relatives, without you, would be everything to me, but in your presence they are nothing. I myself am nothing more than your possession.

SATURDAY, *December 29th.*

I often read over your charming letters. They are to me, in some sort, like your presence. I am astonished, dear love, that this correspondence, which is so sweet to me, should still occasion you any scruples, for the manner in which you blame yourself for not having scruples shows me that you still feel them. Do you not, then, remember that I am your husband; that I ought to be the only confidant and the legitimate depositary of all your thoughts; that this intimate mutual communication which is only permitted us through letters is one of my rights, as it is one of my duties. Oh, my Adèle, do not speak to me again, I entreat you, of your dread of being overesteemed by me! Must I never cease repeating that when you do so you occasion me the utmost distress? I beg you to be very sure of your Victor, and to have

confidence in one who lives entirely in you and for you. Do not oblige me to do what you yourself express with so much grace, to defend *my wife against my wife.*

Yes, I am proud of my adored wife, of my good and charming Adèle; and this is not *vanity,* it is pride, and pride of the purest description. Your virtues are my treasure, your perfections are my wealth, and I will defend them against your own attacks with the jealousy of a mother and the ardor of a husband.

When I told you that your soul comprehended poetry, I revealed to you only one of your heavenly faculties. You ask: *Are not verses poetry, then?* Verse *in itself* does not constitute poetry. Verse is only an elegant vestment for a beautiful form. Poetry can express itself in prose, but it does so more perfectly under the grace and majesty of verse. It is poetry of soul that inspires noble sentiments and noble actions as well as noble writings. A poet who is a bad man is a degraded being, baser and more culpable than a bad man who is not a poet.

This is enough of indifferent things, things in regard to which you feel, moreover, more than I can tell you. I only wish that you could know how beautiful, elevated, and poetical is your soul. When we are married, dear love, it will be you who will inspire me, you with whom I shall take counsel concerning all I do, and thus, in addition to having owed you already all my happiness, I shall also owe you my success, should I achieve it.

Be satisfied with yourself, without ceasing to be

modest. Humility becomes you so well! But you should distinguish between the modesty which consists in ignoring one's own advantages and that which is displayed by attributing them in some sort to others, and in being grateful to God for the gifts of nature, as well as to our parents for the advantages of education. This last is the only real, the only enduring, modesty. It preserves us against false pride, and leads us to a just sense of our own value.

I weary you, my dear and noble Adèle, for you know all this better than I do. Forgive me, but it is you who are responsible for it, for it is you who, by your scruples and your fears, have led me into these dull and pointless dissertations. They are useful, however, in proving that my esteem for you is not less real than my tenderness.

Adieu. I do not know whether you will be able to read this scrawl. Substitute *I love you* for all the words that you are unable to decipher; then you will always have the thought.

Adieu! Tell me of your health, and permit your husband to embrace you.

1822

We have seen Victor Hugo resume his sweet habits of love, restored to him after a long and painful separation. He was again able to see Adèle at her own home, but in the presence of her parents, with considerable frequency, and sometimes he met her alone elsewhere. He accompanied her and her mother to the theatre, or in walks, and, above all, he wrote to her, and she answered him.

These were precious joys in comparison with that sad year of solitude, but they were alloyed for Victor by one mortal uneasiness.

More than six months had passed since the death of Mme. Hugo, the new year, 1822, had just opened, and as yet no change had taken place in his worldly prospects. His father had not yet given to his marriage the necessary consent, and, indeed, remained in entire ignorance of his son's love affairs. As to a position under government or the promised pension, his hopes of them seemed constantly to recede. How long was this state of things likely to last?

M. Foucher, worthy man, would perhaps have had patience, but he was not alone. Uncle Asseline and his wife, Victor Foucher, the elder brother, and the cousins—above all, the cousins—expressed themselves astonished at the delay, blamed the affection of the lovers, and spoke of Adèle's reputation as compromised. They threw the blame on poor Adèle herself, who in her turn threw it upon Victor—a cruel anxiety for his susceptible, poetic soul.

In vain he postponed the supreme moment. It became necessary to put an end to this clamor, to take some decision, to *act*. He only half believed in the pension; he worked at his romance, he worked at a drama; he already felt his power. Money he knew would be forthcoming in the end. His greatest difficulty would, he feared, be to obtain the consent of his father.

This difficulty, which had already caused him so much suffering in his mother's case, was now of far greater gravity. If General Hugo refused his consent, it could only legally be dispensed with by waiting five years for Victor's full majority. Victor could not dream of asking the Foucher family to extend their patience thus far. Would he himself be able to endure the suffering caused by solitude and hopeless separation? When Adèle no longer existed for him, what then? . . .

When we consider how strong love was in the heart of this young man, when we remember the gravity, and even gloom, of his ardent temperament, it is evident that the question which he proposed to put to his father would be one of life or death to him.

FRIDAY EVENING, *January* 4, 1822.

I should have done well to leave you the day before yesterday at your own door, for I should not then have embarked on that discussion which must have been a matter of indifference to you, and which, nevertheless, procured for me so chilling a farewell. For I can only attribute that icy adieu to the conversation in which we had just been engaged. An hour before we were in such perfect accord! Would that I had quitted you then! I should have come home with a glad heart, and now a thousand bitter thoughts refuse to mingle with the pleasure of writing to you. It does not seem to me that I can have said anything in our discussion which should have offended you. My words were certainly not words of scandal or of envy, and I fail to understand how I can have displeased you by taking up the defence of the only man in France who is worthy of enthusiasm.* If I myself am destined ever to achieve an illustrious career, it seems to me, dearest Adèle, that admiration bestowed on me by fresh minds and youthful souls would be, after yours, my sweetest recompense. But let us leave all this.

I must say frankly, however, that I seldom have the pleasure of finding you in accord with my opinions. Whatever opinion I advance, even if I express before you one in opposition to my own (and it is strange that this seldom happens except when I am talking to you), you are much more ready to agree with the other side than with mine. It seems to be only neces-

* This remark refers to Chateaubriand, for whom Victor Hugo entertained the most ardent admiration.

Residence of Victor Hugo, Rue Notre Dame des Champs, 1822







sary that a remark should pass my lips for it to be an error in your eyes. I never adopt an opinion until I have inquired of myself whether it is noble and generous—that is to say, whether it is worthy of a man who loves you. Alas! when I express this opinion, it may be that it hurts the feelings of some other person who is present, it may be opposed by some one, and then I naturally look for some assurance of your approval, yours being the only one of which I am ambitious, or which gives me satisfaction. It is always in vain! You look at once dissatisfied, your brow is overcast, your words are brief. Sometimes you even impose silence upon me. Then I am obliged to hold my peace, and to appear like a prophet who disbelieves in his own prophecies; or, if I continue the discussion, I retire at last discouraged, because I have displeased you by maintaining ideas which I had believed to be worthy of you, but which, according to all appearances, turn out to be contrary to your own.

I believe, dear love, that all I am saying is simple and natural. Yet I have no certainty that you will not consider it self-conceit. And even if it is self-conceit, it will be your own fault. Have you not permitted me to believe myself loved by you? Dear love, a small and narrow self-confidence will never enter into a soul which has the audacity to love you. My pretensions are very much higher than the pretensions of self-conceit. What I hope is to make you happy—perfectly happy; to associate my obscure and earthy mind with your luminous and heavenly one, my soul with your soul, my fate with your

fate, my immortality with your immortality. You may consider all this as mere poetry if you will, for poetry is love. What is there real in this world, if it is not poetry? This language may strike you as singular; but reflect, my Adèle, that poetry and virtue, in my mind, are synonyms, and then it will appear quite simple to you. When love fills up a man's whole nature, self-conceit cannot easily find a place there. It is true that I have not invariably shown a very profound respect for the common run of men. My consciousness does not tell me that I am better than they are, but that I am different from what they are, and this is sufficient for me.

You must not conclude, my adored Adèle, from all I have just written, that I attach an extreme importance to my opinions. On the contrary, you should remark that it is not my own opinion, but yours, that I rate highly. What distresses me is that I should contradict your opinions, which are certainly much more just than mine. When we are married, dear love, I will guide myself always by what you think best. I will never act without having referred my actions to you, for you have an instinct in regard to all things that are noble. My only regret at this moment is that all my efforts to think in a manner worthy of you do not appear to satisfy you. You yourself have never experienced this feeling, for if you had you would have complained of it to me.

Do you know, my Adèle, that the coldness of your farewell has preoccupied me so painfully during these last two days that I have not been able to accomplish anything? Thus the fear of having displeased you

is added to remorse at having wasted my time. Every day is now precious to me, when all should be devoted to working for you.

There is one idea which often occurs to me that I must communicate to you. It is that all the promises of service from men in power may not be of so much use to me as one might suppose. I rely only upon myself, because only of myself am I secure. I greatly prefer, dear love, to work for a dozen nights in succession than to spend one hour in soliciting assistance from other people. Do not you feel the same? I am sure of it. And how proud I shall be when I can offer you a competence that is due only to my own exertions! When I am able to say: "No one but myself has contributed to the welfare of my Adèle."

When, oh! when will all these delightful hopes be realized? But I do not complain. If I have not as yet entered into the joys of life, my capacity to do so remains in reserve for the bliss in store for me. My dearest, all those who love me should rejoice on the morning that I wed you before the eyes of all men, for then my cup of happiness will be more full than that of any other man. Marriage will open for me a new existence. It will be, as it were, a new birth. How sweet it will be, after so long experiencing an intense virginal passion, to have it fulfilled, through the enjoyment of delights before unknown, by a chaste, healthful, satisfied, and not less ardent affection!

Oh, my Adèle, forgive me! I do not know whither my imagination leads me, but sometimes, when I

reflect that no one except myself has any right in you, that you are exclusively my own, I am amazed at my unworthiness, and I ask myself what is there in me to deserve such great good-fortune? If you could know, dear love, with what an agony of prayer I implore God to have pity on my solitude, and to grant me the angelic being who is promised me, you would, perhaps, be able to conceive what power an immortal love can exercise over a mortal being. It is this love, Adèle, that has me completely under subjection. My intense temperament, my proud spirit, my ambitious soul, have all been dominated by my love; they are all concentrated on you alone, all changed into one desire, one idea, one aspiration; and this desire, this idea, this aspiration, which together constitute my entire life, are altogether yours.

At present I live an imperfect life. You are lacking to me—that is to say, everything is lacking to me. Our rare and brief interviews give me some comfort, but they do not completely satisfy me. I need to see you often; I need to see you always. This feeling is so deeply implanted in my nature that it has become an instinct with me. The overpowering necessity of seeing you is constantly drawing me into places where I have a slight hope that I may have a glimpse of you. I am, therefore, often very near you without your suspecting it. I should like to be disguised or invisible, in order to be near my wife at all times, to follow all her steps, to attend on all her movements. I breathe freely only when in her atmosphere.

Dear love, oh! when will you belong to me? I am,

indeed, most unworthy of you, my Adèle, in that I suspected you the day before yesterday of having deceived me. Do not despise me, I conjure you, for having for a moment conceived such an insulting idea. *You* untruthful! *You* to deceive me! I could sooner believe that the sun in the heavens and eternity itself were liars.

Adieu, my good, my noble Adèle. Love your Victor, imperfect as he is, for he at least appreciates the completeness of his Adèle's perfection.

THY FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

TUESDAY, *January 8th.*

Adèle, all that you said to me in your letter of yesterday is perfectly just. I thank you, dear love, for having written it, notwithstanding that it has aroused me as from a dream. It is one of your rights to speak to me of my affairs, for my affairs are yours. Even more than this, it is my duty, and it is one of my dearest rights, to ask counsel of you in regard to all that concerns me; and my confidence in you, as well as my profound esteem for my wife, advise me very differently in this respect than does her own modesty. I should have wished, long since, to exercise this right, had I not been afraid of filling up these letters, which are my only joy, by details tedious both to you and to myself. But this reason disappears of its own accord from the moment that your wish in the matter answers to my own. There is another and more powerful reason, however, which still deters me. In giving you an account of all that I am doing, and of all that happens to me, I should be apprehensive of

seeming, directly or indirectly, to sing my own praises, and on this account only, my dearest Adèle, the frankness which you ask for—as if, indeed, the request were necessary—will be somewhat difficult. But if I am constrained, in spite of myself, to enter into some explanation apparently lacking in humility, I hope, dear love, that you will recollect that it is not I who have sought an occasion to obtrude myself, and that the details, which I shall try to make as brief as possible, are essential to enable you to understand not only my present position, but the possibilities in my future as well.

What is necessary to our happiness, dear love? Some thousand francs of income, and the consent of my father. That is all. What cause have we, then, for uneasiness? For myself, my distress arises not from uncertainty, but from delay. I am sure that I shall be able, by my own exertions, to earn the means of subsistence for you and for me. I hope that my father, after having wrecked my mother's happiness, will not destroy mine as well. I rely also on being able, so soon as I attain my majority, to render him some service which will, in some sort, oblige him to approve our union. But what reduces me to despair is that patience has never been a virtue of mine, and that I am wholly ignorant of when this happiness will arrive, although I know for a certainty that it will do so, at least unless death forestalls it.

Do not ask me, Adèle, how it is that I am confident of obtaining an independent subsistence, for I shall then be obliged to speak to you of a Victor Hugo

whom you do not know, and with whom your own Victor is in no way desirous that you should make acquaintance. It is this Victor Hugo who has friends and enemies, who is entitled by reason of his father's military rank to appear everywhere in society as the equal of all the world, who has attained a precocious reputation on account of some very slender literary efforts, and whom every one in society, where he rarely displays his cold, melancholy face, believes to be occupied with some serious undertaking, when he is really dreaming only of a sweet, charming, virtuous young girl who, fortunately for him, is ignorant of the social world. This Victor Hugo, my Adèle, is a very insipid person. I could—I ought, perhaps, to speak of him at some length, in order to show you, by a number of details, that his future offers some reasonable expectations; but I beg you to agree to accept this on my word, for the Victor Hugo I speak of is very wearisome to your own Victor, who has already endured a great deal in writing these few lines. I am completely confused, my sweet love, at having been led into speaking so much about myself, but it is your own fault. I repeat that I speak of myself at such length only at your own desire, for if you ask me what I look forward to, it is needful that I should tell you on what my expectations are based.

I am aware that you have been inspired with a prejudice, which has very little foundation, against the profession of letters. Nevertheless, dear love, it is to this that I owe the position which I now occupy. I do not know whether I shall succeed, but I think it is

also doubtful whether there are many young men of my age, without private fortune, who can offer you the same guarantee for the future in themselves. What have I done that I should be forced to tell you all this? Yet, why should you not enter into my real life? You will have no difficulty in understanding me, and it may even be that your hopes will outrun mine. I am obliged to have recourse to my eternal formula, and to entreat you not to do me the injustice of supposing all this to be the language of self-love. My dearest, if there is one thing more than any other that I wish, it is that you should believe in my sincerity; it is that you should believe me when I tell you that there is only one thing which can ever make me boastful, and that is that I am beloved by you. I wish that you could be witness how the praise, and even the enthusiasm, of indifferent people bores me, and at the same time, my Adèle, what a profound impression is made upon me by your approval in the slightest degree. You may be very sure that the man for whom you are a model and an idol can never be touched by vanity, self-love, or false pride.

I am often told—it has, indeed, been recently said to me very plainly—that I am destined to achieve a *dazzling reputation* (I repeat this hyperbole in its exact words). For my own part, I care only for domestic happiness. Yet, if this can only be attained by success in my profession, I should regard fame as a means, and not as an end. I should live apart from my own renown, while at the same time feeling for it the respect to which fame, in itself, is always entitled. If it should come to me according to predic-

tions, I shall have neither desire nor hope in regard to it, for I have no hope and no desire to give to anything but to you.

Adèle, you are my only object, and all roads for the attainment of my end seem good to me, provided I might follow them in a straightforward and upright manner, without crawling in the dust and without stooping. This was my idea when I told you that I should be much better pleased to earn a livelihood by my own exertions than to wait upon the uncertain good-nature of some man in power. There are a great many ways of making a fortune, and I should assuredly have made mine by some of them ere this if I had been willing to do so by favor or by flattery. That is not my way. I confine myself to asking for the fulfilment of that to which I have a right. I have obtained a promise, and I am expecting its fulfilment.

In other respects, dear love, you are already informed of all that concerns me. Tell me, would you have advised any other course than that which I have adopted? Would it have been really worthy of you that your Victor should go each day to weary every one, from the minister to his lowest clerk, with his persistence? I am still in ignorance as to whether my simple and reasonable claim has been heard, but certainly neither you nor I would have wished it to succeed at such a price. It is well known that men sometimes obtain everything they wish by means of women, through intrigue, through corruption and vanity—things which, bad as they are, are not condemned by the world. I hate myself for telling

you, even in the fewest possible words, that I could have done this, but I am confident that it is needless to add that your husband rejects such baseness with horror and disgust.

What remains, then, for a young man who disdains to push himself by the two most easy ways? Nothing but the consciousness of strength and his own self-respect. For me, Adèle, the knowledge of your affection makes all my strength. One must follow one's career with clean hands and a pure heart, and advance in it as rapidly as may be without injuring any one else. The rest one must leave to the justice of God.

You must not conclude from all this, my love, that I am satisfied to abandon myself, in my retreat, to work of my own choice, which is, perhaps, unfruitful, and that I close my eyes, through indifference, to any other means of success. Great Heavens! Adèle, is not your future united to mine? If any reasonable opportunity were to present itself to-morrow of doing something that an upright man might do, nothing should prevent my taking advantage of it with alacrity and pursuing it with vigor. If, to obtain you three months sooner, all that was necessary was to abandon the projects and the dreams of my whole life, to follow a new occupation, to undertake new studies, I should do so joyfully, my Adèle. You would be mine, and should I then have anything to regret? I would thank Heaven for all the thorns with which my path might be strewn, provided that path conducted me to you. Oh, tell me, my adored Adèle, by what pains, by what labors,

can I obtain you? Everything would seem to me sweet and lovely, provided only there were no baseness in it.

I can tell you nothing further, dearest Adèle, neither more nor less. On the day that I told you that I loved you I told you everything. Love is the only feeling that cannot be exaggerated. You might command me to-morrow to go and amuse myself, or to die, and it would be my duty to obey you instantly, or else I should not love you. To love is to live no longer in one's self; it is to live in another. One becomes a stranger to one's own existence—to interest one's self only in that of the being beloved. Thus, all your Victor's devotion to you, all his sacrifices for you, are not deserving of thanks or praise; they are the necessary consequences of a sentiment developed by circumstances independent of his own will. If you love me, you should understand me. If I love you, I ought to refer everything to you. I am then no longer of any account in my own sight, and if anything of mine can be of use to you, it is perfectly natural that I should devote it to your service on the instant, even if it be my life.

I must recapitulate, dear love, or you will lose yourself in this immense letter. I am able to tell you that my future is full of hope, but that I owe this hope not to myself, but to pure chance. Hope, however, is not certainty; but where does one find certainty in the destinies of men? (Observe here, my Adèle, that I weigh all my words, and that I express myself with frankness, because I am sure that you will not put a false interpretation upon what is said to you.) It is

more than probable that I shall some day inherit something from my father; for, although my family troubles contain more than one secret (I am now confiding one of them to you), it is to be presumed that during the four years that he has exercised vice-regal functions in Spain he cannot have failed to lay by something. Moreover, he has, in some sort, admitted as much, though almost in spite of himself. As to his consent, I do not do him the injustice to doubt it.

Now, my Adèle, if your parents wish for anything more, I will offer them a heart full of courage and of love for you. I cannot promise them to succeed, but I can promise to do all that is humanly possible to do for that end. If all my guarantees fail to satisfy them . . . then I shall go and say to them what I should have said at the beginning of this letter, if I had listened to the first impulse of the feeling prompted by yours. I will go to your parents' house and I will say to them: "You have made me very happy by allowing me to see your daughter. Since you granted me this happiness of your own accord, I have resigned myself to renouncing it for a time. I do not know whether I shall be able to live long without seeing her, but I shall try to do so, and, with the hope of one day possessing her, I may succeed. At present it seems that you doubt my future prospects. Adieu; you shall see me again when I am in possession of an independence and the consent of my father, or you shall never see me more."

This is what I have decided to do, Adèle, on the morning after the first day your parents show that

they are afraid of compromising your future by uniting it with mine. Perhaps, indeed, I should already have notified them of this. The happiness of seeing you has made me close my eyes up to the present moment; still, I am aware that only a hint is needed to arouse the susceptibility of my character. Who knows? I flatter myself that, perhaps, since I have suffered so much, I may have earned the right to hope for a little happiness. But it may be that all this is an illusion, and if I am really destined to misfortune, what right have I to make you share it? Adèle, your parents are right in wishing to have done with me until I shall be in a prosperous position. In the absence of that they do wisely to abandon me.

You yourself are happy; you have a father and a mother, both of whom are ready to sacrifice everything for your happiness. For myself, no one takes any interest in my future; I am an orphan. On whichever side I turn my eyes, I see myself solitary. You are generous enough to love me; but you are not your own mistress, and, moreover, you will soon have forgotten me when I am no longer near you. That is human nature. Why should I imagine that there would be an exception made in my favor? Yes, it is true that I myself am an exception, because the love that I have for you is an exceptional one. Adèle, you will see that it will be only a short time before we shall say farewell to each other; and if we come to that farewell, you will find, Adèle, that it will be our last. You are kind, you are gentle as an angel; he to whom you will some time belong will be very happy.

Adieu, dear love. May you never shed tears as bitter as those that have been wrung from me while concluding this letter. I was deeply moved even in writing all those frigid details, but it was not within my power to restrain this emotion up to the end. There are in these four pages a great many words which will especially strike you, but which have, notwithstanding, been very sad to me to write. Adieu, adieu, my dearest Adèle. I have never loved you more than at this moment, when I feel that a new separation is in store for us. Adieu; I had a thousand things to say to you, but there is a cloud between me and my thoughts. I am still your husband, am I not? To tell you that I shall be so all my life does not imply that I shall be so very long! Adieu.

SUNDAY MORNING, *January 14th.*

Now there is nothing left for me but to hide my face in my hands and await the stroke. Your letter, Adèle, is at once very bitter and very generous; it is very generous because it is filled with a disinterestedness so much the more admirable because it is not inspired by love. I remember that you once said to me *passion is out of place.* My last letter cost me a great deal. You are undoubtedly the only person in the world to whom I could have written all that it contained. In it I pushed frankness as far as it is possible to carry it, perhaps even to an immodest extent. You may now triumph in the sacrifice you have obtained. How will it please you? What more can I say to you in a letter? I do not know, for I cannot even tell whether

I should have been able to give you more details in a personal interview. You answer my expansion with reticence. *If I were in your place,* you tell me, . . . and there you pause. But, Adèle, what more do I ask of you than your advice? I have implored it with insistence. I would have done anything to make you think me worthy of it. But what does it matter? Up to the present time all my actions have been directed towards one end, that of obtaining you, and of obtaining you in a proper manner. I was not sure of success, but I did believe myself sure of a reward which is to me very sweet, the happiness of being approved by you. I was deceived, it seems, in that hope. At the very moment that I give you the highest proofs of confidence and esteem, you withdraw from me your own confidence and refuse me your esteem. Ah, well, since my fate is nothing in your eyes, leave me to my gloom; take away from me the hand that has sustained me, the look that has encouraged me, the voice that had the power to save me in spite of my own blindness. I shall have no right to complain, for I am a fool and an outcast, and you yourself are too much in the right not to be happy.

None the less, it is not I who will withdraw in the first instance. I shall remain up to the last moment such as you have always found me, ready and glad to give my life if it can procure you the smallest pleasure. Since you deprive me of your opinion, I will do everything that your parents may suggest. There is only one human creature for whose sake I could submit to these humiliations without murmur-

ing. I will submit, hopelessly, to fresh ones, if it is necessary, provided that they stop short at the point where humiliations become indignities.

Of the phrase in which you reproach me for my *amour propre* I will not complain. I will take everything upon myself, and, if any misfortune occurs, it shall be my fault, and mine alone; for I repeat, all that the parents of Adèle require I will do. I wish for nothing more than to give them fresh proofs of a love that nevertheless stands, it seems to me, in no need of being proved. I fear that too much precipitation as regards my father may cost us everything; but I bow to a wish which is for me a law. What is my own happiness, at any rate? It is yours, Adèle, which, if necessary, must be separated from my own deplorable future at any price. Moreover, I shall not remain here to complain. My life will have been crowned by a beautiful dream, from which I shall emerge only to enter on a sleep in which one dreams no longer. No, I shall not linger here to suffer. When all is over for me, all will be begun again for you. I shall have crossed your life without leaving a trace behind. My soul will resign itself to an eternal widowhood, if at this price it can purchase any measure of earthly felicity for you. May you be happy.

You are ready to exclaim at this, to ask me what reason I can have to believe in your forgetfulness. Adèle, I do believe in it, and I believe it will be speedy. One night I wrote you in my own mind a letter of twenty pages, in which I related many proofs of affection which I had given you during our separation,

and of which you are in ignorance, and I compared them with the evidences of indifference that up to this time I have received from you. But I did not have the courage to write down these miserable details, to record with my own hand my condemnation of you. Moreover, what would it have availed me? It would only have shown that you deceived yourself when you believed you loved me; and it is better to leave this to be done by time.

If any one had come and told me a week ago that you would not be mine, I should have given the lie direct to the devil himself. To-day, I am even more apprehensive than yourself, for you fear only *immense difficulties.* It is not what you call my plan *of waiting on events* which is the cause of my distress; this lies in your parents' lack of confidence in me, and in the universal suspicion I inspire in your associates. I will be more generous than all of you, for I am willing to destroy my own future solely to show my submission to your wishes. I will carry out all your intentions, and I shall do so with an appearance of serenity, although I am aware that I shall succeed in nothing but in destroying my own hopes. I do not know what I say: *My future,* my *hopes!* Have I a future? Have I any hopes? This rupture would wound me cruelly were it only because it will, perhaps, cause you some momentary annoyance, and it would be my desire never to occasion you the slightest pain. You still repeat, and with sincerity (for you believe it for the moment), that you will be always mine, and that no power shall separate us, for you will withstand every effort.

Adèle, I have letters of yours extending back to March, 1820, in which you tell me the same thing, and yet you have been smiling and happy for the last eighteen months without me. This must be the case, for a marriage (I do not know with whom) has been proposed for you—has been proposed to your father—and it even acquired a sufficiently definite character to be spoken of to a stranger. If you had had me in your thoughts during this time, would you have suffered such an offer to be repeated? Yet, how can I stoop to discuss this matter? Some one else will be successful. It may be that he will make you happier than I. I love you too much. I am jealous, extravagantly. It is annoying, is it not, to be adored by your husband? Some day, Adèle, you will appear as the wife of another man. Then you will collect all my letters and burn them, and no vestige of my soul's path on earth will remain; but if your indifferent glance rests for a moment on these records, where I have foretold that you will forget, you will be unable to refrain from admitting to yourself that Victor, for once in his life, judged rightly. What does anything matter, provided you are happy?

Alas! and yet I, I would with joy have resigned my hopes of another and a better life to have passed this narrow and gloomy existence at your feet. Do not let us speak of it any more. Everything is about to fall down of itself. I will do everything that your family require, Adèle. I promise you that I will do so. I am most impatient now to reach the time when I can lay aside my cares, although my course in

life has not been long. Only you must remember that you refused me your advice, that I implored it of you on my knees, and that you considered it your duty to *keep silence*.

Perhaps you have done wisely. You ought to be the best judge; for, Adèle, I owe it you to bear witness, once again, that the soul of an angel is not more beautiful or purer than yours. I am mad and presumptuous to have aspired to share your life. I tell you this with heartfelt sincerity; I am of no consequence compared to others; and what, indeed, am I beside you?

The end of your letter touched me, because any words of tenderness from my beloved Adèle must do so at the moment when she ceases to be my Adèle. But they are nothing but words. If I should be taken ill to-morrow, I know that my bed of suffering will remain as lonely as that of a criminal. You will, perhaps, inquire assiduously for three or four days from the person whose duty it will be to inform you. After that I shall be free to die if I please, or according to the will of the Almighty, and all will be as if I had never lived. I have no mother, and no one is under any obligation to love me.

But all this would perhaps be for the best, for the greater part of my ideas are false and absurd. I am a fool. Oh! Adèle, it is you who will never know how deeply I have loved you! How should you know? You close your eyes and ears. I declare to you that it is one of my rights to consult you in regard to my affairs, and you answer me that you will never discuss them with me, that you owe something

to your own dignity, and that I force you to remember that you are a young girl. Adèle, is this your confidence? But I repeat that I will not endure the pain of being the one to bring about another rupture. It shall be the work of your father, whose consent I have had for a year, and whose refusal I shall now have within three months. But your parents are right, and your future must no longer be compromised. It is right for them to consider what they are doing. It is right that you should think of a new future, should prepare yourself for a new happiness. For myself, I am going gradually to withdraw from you.

Do not be surprised, Adèle, if in future you do not find that I shall seek occasions to see you. I shall go to your house when I am invited, but I should fail in my duty if I sought for invitations.

Happily, I shall not have many bitter days. And when my sentence shall have been pronounced I shall quit Paris. If this must be done to save your reputation, what is it I would not do?

But no—I will not speak any more about my death. It is a grewsome subject, and possibly you might esteem me less if you knew how weak I might prove in the presence of misfortune. Besides, what is my death to you?

Adieu. Send me an answer once more, I implore you. Once more, and as soon as possible. After that I shall cease to importune you. Alas! my adored Adèle, you will probably write to me as to a stranger, for since my last letter displeased you, this one . . . !

Yes, you will treat me like a stranger; yet God

is my witness that the heart of him who has been your husband was never more swollen with grief, was never more filled with ardent love for you, than it is now. Adieu.

SATURDAY, *January 19th.*

How can I tell you, my adored Adèle, what has been passing in my heart during the last two days? The night of Thursday will ever be one of the most sorrowful I have ever passed, and yet full of the most tender recollections. But now that I have seen you once more, rosy and smiling, I am delivered from the worst of my anxieties, the most cruel of my fears. All will go well now, and doubtless in a short time you will be quite yourself again.

Who would have believed that the night in which I had promised myself so much happiness would have brought me so much sorrow? In the first place, there was the sorrow of going without you, a disappointment that was the greater because all day I had expected to accompany you. Then I thought you had made the new arrangement. After that came the sorrow of seeing you so unwell, so suffering! Adèle, my dearest Adèle, to have seen you so exquisitely dressed, so charming, so radiant in beauty, and then to see you lying on a bed of pain, while all those other men and women in the house were dancing, frolicking, and laughing, as if there were not near them an aching heart and a suffering angel! Dear love, that night will never be effaced from my remembrance. I, while beside myself with despair, stood in the midst of that joyous crowd, forced to smile and to abstain from weeping, only anxious to be rid

of them, and then you thrust me away when I came near you. You cannot conceive what I felt then. In those few hours I lived years of sorrow. My Adèle, I had a heart full of pity, and no one had any pity for me. Oh, what I suffered!—much more than yourself!

And yet this pain was not without its charm, for it showed me the extent and the depth of my love for you. Only I could have wished to be in your place, for then I should certainly not have felt any suffering, if you had been near me. And when we returned home together, when I held my adored Adèle, sick and suffering, in my arms, when I felt her heart beat beneath my hand, and her face lay close up to my cheek, then—yes, then—I would have thanked God had He let me die at that moment. How happy I should have been, but for the expression of pain upon your face. Oh, what am I? O God! . . .

I, your protector, your husband, I could not prevent my Adèle from suffering, even when I held her in my arms! . . . My dearly beloved! Adieu, my angel; adieu, my adored Adèle. Let your poor husband fancy that he kisses you a thousand and a thousand times!

I will certainly write to you to-morrow.

SUNDAY, *January 20th.*

I go back again to that ball, dear love, as for three days I have thought of little else. It was the scene of the strongest emotions I have ever experienced. That ball will be a marked epoch in my memory, like one other ball. . . .

Adèle, I never told you about that other ball. I feel now as if I must talk about the sorrows of that night, so painfully awakened by those of last Thursday.

It was Friday, the 29th of June. Two days before that I had lost my mother. It was ten o'clock at night when I returned from the cemetery at Vaugirard. I was walking home, hardly conscious, I think I was in a state of stupor, when chance led me near your house. The door was open, lamps blazed in the court-yard, and light shone in the windows. I stopped before that threshold which I had not crossed for so long a time. I paused there, mechanically. At that moment two or three men roughly brushed past me, laughing loudly. I trembled, for I suddenly remembered that the day with you was a *fête* day. I was resuming my walk, for this recollection made me feel more deeply my own isolation and bereavement. But I could not stir a step; something seemed to restrain me. I stood still, feeling as if I had no power over my ideas. By degrees consciousness came back to me. Some suggestion of the devil, I think, impelled me to test my fate at once, to decide it, as it were, at one blow. I wanted to see if I had lost my wife, as well as my mother. If I had lost her, what was left to me but death? Adèle, how can I tell you? Despair made me a maniac. I had arms about me. I had grown weak from long watching and anxiety. I wished to see if you could have forgotten me. A crime (is suicide under such circumstances a crime?) seemed a small matter to one who was in the depths of misery.

In short, I know not what insane ideas took possession of me. I am ashamed of them now; but you may see by that, at least, how much I love you. I crossed the court-yard, I ran up the great staircase, I went through the rooms in the first story, which were empty. There, by the light of the festive lamps, I saw the crape on my own hat. The sight of it recalled me to myself. I fled in haste. I concealed myself in the long corridor where you and I had so often played together. At the end of the corridor I heard, overhead, the sound of music and dancing. I do not know what demon impelled me to run up a back staircase which leads to the rooms of the Council of War. There the sounds of gayety became more distinct. I went up higher. On the second story was a little square of glass which looked into the ball-room. I do not know if I was then myself, or what I thought of at that moment. I put my burning face against the cold glass, and looked round for you. I saw you. What tongue could tell you what, at that sight, passed within me? I will merely tell you what I saw. I have no words to describe my feelings. For a long time your Victor, standing mute and motionless, wearing his funeral crape, looked at his Adèle in her ball-dress. The sound of your voice could not reach me, but I saw smiles upon your lips, and, dearest, it broke my heart. I was very near you, but I was doubtless very far from your thoughts. I waited. There was still in my heart, though abandoned to despair, some power of love and pangs of jealousy. If you had waltzed, I should have been lost. It would have seemed to me

a proof that I was completely forgotten, and I could not have survived it. But you did not waltz, and I took it for a sign that I might hope. I stood there a long time. I was present at the *fête* as a phantom may be present in a dream. There could be no *fête,* no joy for me; but my Adèle was enjoying a *fête;* she could share the joy of others!

It was too much for me. There came a moment when my heart was full and when I should have died had I stayed there a moment longer. Just then I awoke to a sense of my own folly, and I slowly walked down the staircase which I had gone up without knowing if I should ever come down alive. Then I went back to my house of mourning, and while you were dancing I knelt and prayed for you beside the bed of my poor dead mother. Subsequently I heard that I had been seen, but I denied that I was there, for my presence in your house at such a time seemed singular, and few hearts could have understood what I have just been telling you.

Oh, Adèle, you will never know how much I love you. My love for you could lead me to commit all sorts of extravagances, possible or impossible. I am mad, but I loved you so much that truly I do not understand, had I committed a crime that night, how God Himself could have condemned me. Adieu. I love you as men love God and the angels.

MONDAY, *January 21st.*

You have forgiven me, Adèle, but can I ever forgive myself? Upon my knees I should have wished to ask your pardon; with my lips I should have wished

to dry your angelic tears; with my blood I would willingly have paid for every one of them. I have been very wrong, my adored Adèle, and I am very wretched for having been so guilty. You may forgive me, but I say bitterly to myself, over and over again, that I never can forgive myself. I thought I never could have experienced greater sorrow than I felt on Thursday, when I saw my beloved Adèle sick and suffering. But that was nothing to what I felt to-day when I saw you weeping and suffering through my fault. I hate myself. I curse myself. The more sweet, kind, and admirable I esteem you, the more odious I seem to myself. To have disturbed the repose of my Adèle when she was ill is a crime for which I never can be sufficiently punished, and your inexhaustible indulgence only makes me more deeply sensible of its enormity.

And yet, dear love, I implore you to believe that, indeed, I am not really cruel or unkind. I am wholly unworthy of you, but, allowing for my imperfect nature, perhaps my conduct may be excused. It was the first time you had ever seemed to wish me absent. The idea that my presence was unwelcome, and, therefore, that you no longer loved me, fermented in my brain. You tried to call me back, but the blow was struck. Shall I tell you everything? When I got out of the house I hesitated as to whether I should go back that evening. It seemed to be proved to me that my presence was too much for you. Tell me, dear love, could I have loved you and have been able to endure such a thought with indifference? I cannot now tell what I did. Only believe that I could not

bear to give you such affliction. Yes, my Adèle, I am very much to blame, but think it over, and if you can read the soul of your poor Victor, you will see that my fault had its origin in an excess of love.

If you could but know what a night I passed! . . . But I will not speak of that; it does not signify what I suffered. I would gladly have suffered a hundred times more, could that have been possible, to have spared you one minute's pain.

Do not imagine I am trying to justify myself. Any justification would be in vain, since I made you weep. Possibly you, in the first place, were a little in the wrong. If you think you were not—for you cannot err—I will take all the fault upon myself, and again I will ask pardon for having dared to attribute any wrong to you.

Ah! your tears deeply moved me. The memory of the angelic sweetness with which you pardoned me will live forever in my heart. Adèle, he whom you love is not ungrateful. The more I see you, the nearer I draw nigh to you, the more I admire you. Every day thoughts of you make me feel how unworthy I am myself, and this comparison, to which my thoughts wander continually, has a charm for me, because it shows me your perfection, your superiority. I am proud of nothing upon earth but of my Adèle.

When will you be mine? When may I daily hold you to my breast and bless Heaven for having given me for my helpmate a being so generous, so virtuous, so innocent? It must surely be soon. Yes, Adèle, all that can be done to attain that end I will do with joy. However hard the conditions may be made for

me that I may win you, they will not seem hard to me, provided only they are such as I can fulfil without loss of honor. I will neglect nothing to secure my own independence, and yours, as speedily as possible, and then I will ask for my father's consent. If he will not grant it, I will give him back the life that he once gave me. But he *will* give his consent, and you at last will be my own!

Adieu, my angelic Adèle. Rely upon my zeal as well as on my love. Since you have forgiven me, permit me to embrace you with the respect of a slave and the tenderness of a husband.

I trust I shall have a long letter to-morrow, and that it will contain nothing that can give me pain. You have forgiven me! Adieu. Take care of your health. It is dearer to me than life, and yet . . . But all is forgotten, is it not?

THURSDAY, *January 24th.*

Your Victor this evening will do nothing but what has reference to you. Think, dear, it is just a week since we both went, not together, but separately, to that ball where your husband was to suffer so much because he could not claim that title in the eyes of the world. If you had been mine, Adèle, I would have carried you in my arms away from all those intruders; I would have watched over you while you slept upon my bosom; that sad night would have been less sad for you; my cares and my caresses would have soothed your pain. The next morning you would have awakened at my side; all day I should have been at your feet, ready to anticipate

your slightest wishes, and every time you felt pain I should have interposed with some new care. Instead of all that happiness, my beloved Adèle, how much constraint and embarrassment we had to endure!

And yet there was enchantment in this torture. When, after trying long to secure one moment of liberty and solitude, I was permitted to enter the chamber where you lay, on tiptoe, and draw near the bed where you were lying still so pretty, in spite of suffering—ah! I was well rewarded for the *ennui* of that ball, and the insipidity of all that crowd of fools. Had I been allowed to kiss your feet, I should have felt it a great happiness. And if, after having for a long time motioned me away, you had given me one tender, gentle word—if I could have read in your charming, half-hidden face, a little love for me, in spite of all you suffered, then, Adèle, I know not what mingled joy and sadness might have taken possession of my whole being, and I would not have exchanged that painful but delicious sensation for all the felicity of the angels.

The idea that you were my wife, but that others, not I, had the right to surround you, made me most unhappy. Oh, these barriers must soon be broken; my wife must be my wife, and our marriage must complete our union. They say that men go mad in solitude—that solitude is worse than celibacy! You cannot know, dear, what inconceivable impulses assail me when I lie awake at night, and throw my arms about my bed with convulsions of love, as I think of you. In my dreams I call on you, I see

you, I embrace you, I utter your name; I would like to creep in the dust at your feet, to be yours for one moment, and then to die. Adèle, my love for you is as pure and chaste as your own breath; but that makes it only the more ardent. It consumes me like a flame of fire.

But it is a sacred flame, lighted only for you. You alone have the right to nourish it. Towards all others of your sex I am blind and indifferent. I never notice if one woman is beautiful, or if another is attractive; I am as little affected by their charms as is the glass before which they stand to admire themselves. I only know that among women is Adèle, the good angel of my life, to whom I owe all my virtues, as well as all my joys. Dear love . . .! And so little is wanted to make us happy! . . .

What you tell me in your last letter about the night of the 17th has greatly touched me. Ah! if my care could cure you! But wait; very soon I shall have the right to give you every care, or my will and my life will be broken to pieces. Remember, your Victor is a man, and this man is your husband.

Is it true, my Adèle, that on that fatal night of June 29th, you would have rushed into my arms, had you been free? Oh, how much that idea would have consoled me in that moment of despair, and how sweet it is to me to know it, now that the first moments have passed, and that the proofs you have given me of your generous tenderness have cicatrized that cruel wound! What can you not do with me, and what are not you to me? Joy and sorrow all

come to me through you; both for me depend upon my Adèle. With you, misfortunes would be sweet; without you, prosperity would be hateful. If I consent to walk on my way through life, it must be with you who have deigned to be my companion. Yes, my adored Adèle, you can do what you like with me with a smile or a tear.

I have one great faculty in my soul, the faculty of loving. All my power of loving is yours, for in comparison with what I feel for you the affection I have for my friends and relatives, and even that I had for my admirable and unhappy mother, is as nothing. Not that I love them less than one ought to love friends, relatives, and one's own dear mother, but that I love you better than any other woman in this world ever yet was loved, because no other ever has deserved such love.

Adieu for this evening. I am going to bed much relieved in mind (for they tell me you are well again), at the same hour when, a week ago, I was trembling with anxiety and pity. Adieu, my beloved Adèle; I embrace you. I am about to kiss the adored lock of hair that you have given me, and that I have not half thanked you for, because I can find no words to express my gratitude. For such a pledge of love I can do nothing but, kneeling before thee, beseech thee to be my good angel in this life and my sister in eternity. Adieu! adieu! Thousands of kisses!

FRIDAY, *January 25th.*

I am about to write to you, my dearest Adèle, to rest myself from writing. Yet I suppose you ought

to scold me. This week I have not done so much work as I ought. We had such griefs on Monday, I had so much to think of Tuesday, and such an amount of correspondence every day since then, that it has consumed all my time. And yet this is the third evening I have passed at home alone. The world—with its demands and its worries, its insipid duties, its wearisome social obligations—is very odious to me. Besides, as you will not be there, there is a good reason for my not caring to go into company.

The steps I have taken with reference to the ministry have thus far gained me nothing more than promises. It is true that these promises seemed positive. I hope, and I wait, until I can hear more. I will tell you all about this matter before long, and will tell your parents as well. It seems quite possible, my love, that in a month or two I may obtain some place that will bring us in two or three thousand francs a year. Then, with what I may make by writing, could we not live together quietly and happily, secure of finding our income increase, even if we have an increasing family? When I reflect, my Adèle, that such happiness is far from being improbable, and may be even near at hand, I am wild with joy.

You may object that I have not the consent of my father. But tell me, why should my father refuse to let me be happy when he sees I can support myself? Why should he not rather try to repair all the wrongs he has done us by one word, which would so easily give him a claim on my everlasting gratitude? It seems to me, indeed, that these prospects

ought to triumph over all difficulties. My father is a weak man, but he is really kind-hearted. If his sons would only show him affection, I think they could do much with him. He wanted very much to get me a position on the London Embassy. This position, which made me wretched, would have flattered his pride and his ambition. Well, I wrote him yesterday a letter which I feel sure will dissuade him from it.

I have never told you, Adèle, how often I have had to fight with many persons—even with your own father—to get rid of the project of this accursed embassy. Many people cannot understand my refusal of such a position, because I cannot tell them my real motive. Dear love, I should have to leave you, and I would as soon be dead. To go so far from you, and to lead a brilliant, dissipated life, would have been what I could not do. I am good only to live beside my Adèle. I only endure the days when I cannot see her by anticipating the days when I can. When hours only have to pass, I calculate the minutes. That is what I shall do all day to-morrow.

Alas, for three long days I have not seen you! All the happiness I can now know has to be sacrificed to those hateful proprieties, and to-morrow, when I shall see you, I shall have to watch over every motion, and shall fear to address you one word or to give you one look—and yet to me your words and your looks are everything.

Some day, Adèle, we will live under the same roof; we will share the same chamber; you will sleep in my arms; I shall have the right to live only for you, and

no one will dare to cast a jealous or disapproving glance on our happiness. Our pleasures will be our duties and our rights. Our life will flow on gently, with few friends, but with much love. All our days will be alike—I mean they will all be happy--and if we have cares and anxieties, we will bear them together; then the burden will be light. Does this future seem attractive to you, my adored Adèle? For my part, if I had not that hope, I do not know what else would keep me alive.

Adieu. Write me a very long letter. Oh, how I love you! I embrace you with tenderness and respect.

YOUR HUSBAND.

January 26th.

Thank you, my Adèle, for being displeased at the words which so little correspond to my real feelings. Your indignation and your distress convince me that I am loved as I wish to be, and as I love you. Your Victor always feels great joy when he perceives in you some new mark of generosity, brought out by an accidental circumstance.

Yes, I should be despicable if ever, in all my life, I had been able to think of any other woman as I think of you, if you were not to me all womankind, and far more to me than all women. The day when I shall cease to feel thus (a day which never can be), I shall be vile and contemptible, both in your eyes and in my own. No, my Adèle, no, I am not unworthy of thee in this respect, even in the smallest, the most careless, of my thoughts. If a desire is ever awak-

ened in me, it turns towards her who purifies and tempers all things, even desire. Every other woman, in my eyes, is composed of a hat and a gown. I ask nothing more of them. Forgive me, you who are so gentle and indulgent, if I say over to you again what I have often said before, but when I speak of my love and my respect for you, how can I refrain?

SATURDAY, *January 26th*, 3 P.M.

Adèle, let us not disguise from ourselves that we parted not well satisfied with each other, and yet we had done our best to make it otherwise. At least I, for my part, can bear witness for myself. Confess, dear friend, that you treated me with some severity, both during and after our conversation. I came home very sad, though I had kept a smile upon my lips up to the last moment.

You have told me often, Adèle, and you repeated it in this conversation, that I left you and your parents *to do my part* (*que je te laissais mon rôle à faire*). My love, if I were twenty-five, and had an income of ten thousand francs, you would not have one moment in which to reproach me. No one would play my part; it would be so sweet to me to play it. I do not see that in my situation I could act otherwise than as I am doing. So long as a part of my future means does not depend upon myself, I do not feel it would have been generous to promise what I was not sure I could fulfil. It would be a wretched, cowardly abuse of confidence. I tell your parents of my affairs exactly as they stand. I act as they wish me to act. I walk in the path they have marked out

for me, even when I would rather follow a way of my own. So doing, I do only my duty; but I do it, and I do it joyfully. Why, then, do you say that I leave you to fulfil what really belongs to me alone?

You told me once, Adèle, that you thought I was *not eager* for our marriage. Adèle, God is my witness that you said that to me one day. I wish to think that you said it without much thought, that you carelessly spoke these inconceivable words. I am now convinced—and the bitter conviction has only come to me within the last hour—that of us two, I am the only one who really desires this marriage. It would be a very lukewarm desire, Adèle, that could look forward with indifference to "waiting *several years,* if people would not talk in the mean time." For—you said it yourself just now—it is only to stop the things that people say that you are anxious to marry me. I admired the way in which, in one of your last letters, you said you despised gossip. Such generosity on your part did not surprise me. I see I made a mistake. Pardon my presumption. You are right. I do not desire that you should have to bear any annoyances, however petty, for my sake, and as soon as "talk" makes you uncomfortable, it is natural you should blame me.

You alone are worthy of a sacrifice—worthy of anything. I speak this from the depths of my heart. I say, besides, that you are the only woman for whose sake I would act as I am now trying to act, though all my efforts you seem to misunderstand. I am proud and shy, yet I have solicited a place from government. I wished to ennoble literature, and I am

working as a breadwinner. I love and I respect my mother's memory, and I have put aside the remembrance of her wrongs in writing to my father. Adèle, what is the use of these efforts? If it is only success you ask of me, I shall gain it in the end, or I shall fall in the attempt.

But I see I am not such a man as you desire for a husband. You said to me but a few moments ago: "*J'aimerais un homme qui* . . ." You did not finish the sentence, leaving me, no doubt, to complete your thought. I left you with the conviction that I am not he whom you *could love,* and with the resolution to do everything I could that you might never again find cause to complain of me, even unjustly.

If this letter seems sad, you will tell me, perhaps, that it is because you spoke to me of my affairs, but that you will not mention them again, etc. I tell you beforehand that such bitter irony will only make things worse. You must surely know that it is honor and happiness to me to receive and to follow your advice. Your counsel will be always dear and precious to me. What makes me wretched is to know that your affection for me did not hinder you from making me a foolish proposal; to know that you would be *willing* to wait *several years* for our marriage; to be told that you *could love a man who* . . .

Yes, Adèle, you are right. A man might win your love if he forgot respect for his own character, if he would abase himself, would make concessions, would renounce his proper place in life for you. I own that I have not been such a man, and to-morrow, if you think I have been wrong, I am still ready

to ask you for forgiveness. Adieu. Allow me to force you once more to embrace me, for, until you decide otherwise, I consider myself still your husband.

THURSDAY, *January 31st.*

I want to write you a few words to-day, that I may not have been uselessly employed in thinking of you all the morning, and that some of my thoughts during the day, when I have not seen you, may at least reach her who is my only thought. What are you doing? Where are you at this moment, my adored Adèle? Is there no recollection of me in the thoughts that now occupy you? If it is true, as you told me, that you are all the time thinking of me, it is one of my greatest happinesses to believe that this sweet, intimate correspondence of thought continually brings our souls together, even when we are not near each other. Your image is my faithful companion; my eyes are always turning towards it, and yours are always open and look at me. It is to this invisible witness that I report all my actions and open all my thoughts. I do nothing that I should not wish my Adèle to see, and my love has become to me a second conscience.

My dear and noble friend, it is thus that I endeavor to keep myself worthy of you; for if I had not made my Adèle, when absent from me, my judge, and my consoler, who knows what might have become of me, abandoned as I was to myself? But though I have no mother, I have a wife who will be always mine, and I am sure of never wanting in life a model and an example. Only what troubles me is that I have

so many faults, for besides those I perceive there are doubtless many others that I have not yet seen. I wish, Adèle, that you would point them out to me, and I would try to correct them so that you might be able some day to put up with them. You, who are perfect yourself, ought to have a perfect husband. In your Victor you will find, at most, one who has done all he could to become so. This is not much to promise you, but it is all that I can do.

Therefore, my kind and charming Adèle, have some indulgence for my errors, for they do not come from my heart; but have no mercy on my defects, because some day they may mar your peace of mind. Save me from such a misfortune by your advice, but love me always, in spite of my imperfections. Love me, if you wish me to live.

FRIDAY, *February 1st.*

Mme. Delon did wrong to show any one my letter. I am sorry for her. I am also sorry for the singular way in which your father spoke to me of that affair.* Your mother looked on it, it seems, more generously. I am telling you exactly what I think. The proposal was quite natural on my part. It was nothing worthy either of praise or blame, and even supposing it was rash and foolish, it hardly deserves the grave tone of displeasure with which your father spoke to me of it. " You might have compromised

*Victor had offered an asylum in his house to his old playfellow, Édouard Delon, condemned to death for participation in the Samur conspiracy. " I was too well known as a Royalist," he wrote to Mme. Delon, " to make it likely that any one would come and look for him in my bedchamber."

yourself," he said. I don't know how that might have been, but before doing a right thing must one always pause to think what harm may come of it? Dear love, decide. I follow blindly whatever you tell me. Had I been in Delon's position, I should have been very thankful had he done for me what I did for him. That is enough.

Mme. Delon, they say, puts an unkind interpretation on my letter. My letter was opened in the post-office. I don't believe the story about Mme. Delon, because I have made up my mind not to despise people without good proof. I want to think that your father acted on a first impression, without having much real knowledge of the case. On further examination, he would have found, perhaps, reason to give me good advice, but he would not have reproached me. That is just what your mother did, because women are better than men, and your mother is an excellent woman.

Allow me, my Adèle, to open my whole heart to you. Your father is not always what he ought to be to me. He is neither cordial nor affectionate to one who would be so glad to love him, since he is your father. To my entire confidence he responds by discouraging coldness. His conduct to me proves that he does not know my character. He ought to know that openness with me will go further than conduct based on careful calculations. This is what her own instinctive kindliness has made known to your mother. She is simple and open with me, and she may be always sure of my deep and sincere attachment.

Do not think, dear, that I mean to blame your father. What I complain of is a very slight thing, and there is nothing really unkind in what he does, because he does all for your happiness. Only I think he is sometimes mistaken in the way he acts towards me. The cleverest people err sometimes. But I shall never blame him, for I have no doubt he is all paternal tenderness to you, and possibly he may have a little regard for me. I only wanted to relieve myself from a weight which burdened me, and, besides, I ought to hide nothing from Adèle, my beloved.

SATURDAY, *February 9th*, 9 P.M.

What have I done, my Adèle, that you should again speak to me about cruel doubts of my esteem? . . . Dear love, if I have taken from the bottom of my heart a resolve to walk carefully, nobly, and without turning aside on that road of life where prosperity too often can only be bought by baseness, be persuaded, my Adèle, it is because of my enthusiastic passion for you. If I had never known you, the most pure and most adorable of all created beings, who knows what I might have been? Oh, Adèle, it is your image engraven on my heart which has developed the germs of any little virtues I may have had.

May God preserve me from taking from my venerable mother what I owe her, but it is undoubtedly true that if I have had the strength to put in practice the principles in which she brought me up, it is because I have loved an angel-like young girl, and have wanted not to be too unworthy of her. Heavens! why do expressions fail me? You may see, my

angel, what a temple ardent love has raised for you in your Victor's heart. Now, accuse me no more of madness. Remember that the feeling you inspire cannot but be as far above an ordinary passion as you are above the world's vulgar women.

À demain. A thousand caresses and a thousand kisses to punish you for doubting my esteem.

YOUR FAITHFUL AND RESPECTFUL HUSBAND.

SUNDAY MORNING, *February 10th.*

After the bad night I have just spent I wish, at least, to pass a happy morning, my beloved Adèle, by writing to you at the very time that I know you are writing to me. Yesterday evening when I left you I did not expect to have a good night. I was too anxious and too agitated. Yet, that I might not disobey you, I resisted the temptation of writing to you; I went, instead, to bed and tried to sleep. I thought bitterly of the tears that once again I had made you shed, of the fears that you still constantly entertain that you may have incurred the contempt of your Victor, and, above all, I thought of the frightful account you had given me of that horrible quarry. Imagine, my Adèle, what a night I must have passed!

Alas! it will be long before I forget that I could, however involuntarily, have tortured the soul of my beloved, my gentle Adèle, to do a thing like that! When I think of all the circumstances that you related to me, I shudder. You to die!—angel! What have you done that you should die? And all because of me—great God!—of me, whose whole life

is not worth one of your tears! Great God! Great God! . . .

I stopped here a moment that I might think of something else, for these ideas are too much for me. It was impossible. All that I had endured during the night came vividly back to me. In vain you smiled when you bade me adieu; in vain I recall the charming letter which I read and re-read yesterday evening, and which I covered with kisses. One painful thought pursued and overwhelmed me. I wanted to talk to you about our happiness, that rapturous happiness which now appears so near, and then I think how nearly, only yesterday, it came to being destroyed forever. What can we dare to count upon in this life?

Oh, my Adèle, could you for one moment have thought of leaving your Victor all alone upon this earth, and of adding widowhood to his present loneliness as an orphan? If you have been so cruel as ever to have entertained such a frightful idea, I tell you beforehand that you would have been mistaken, for I should not have survived four minutes her who is my life and soul. I should have died at the same moment, and in the same way, that I might be sure of following her at once into eternity.

Alas! I wish I could get rid of all such thoughts, which for hours have assailed me, and I am powerless against myself. Adèle, oh, how I wish I could see you at this moment, press you in my arms, make sure that you were near me, really living—for I cannot live without you! Nothing can calm me now but your presence. Until I can see you I must en-

deavor to be resigned. But I shall see you *soon.* Ah! how sad is that word *soon* when I need your presence immediately!

You will smile on me, will you not, my Adèle? At this moment, when I am so lonely, I think of your smile as if anticipating the felicity of the angels. I feel as if it would cure everything—would compensate me for all I have suffered during the past night. What are you doing at this moment? Why are you not beside your Victor, who needs you so greatly? Come, bring him back to life by the sight of you. Adèle, I am athirst to see you. I think I am going mad.

What! can you really love me—you who to me are a creature more divine than Divinity itself? And tell me, am I worthy of so much happiness? Take pity on me, Adèle, for all that reaches me from you fills me either with rapture or despair.

Adèle, Adèle, my adored angel, I shall soon see you. I can kiss the lines that you have written, the paper that your hand has rested on! Adieu! I cannot pity myself when I remember all that you have done for me. *Adieu, je t'embrasse, et je t'adore.*

TUESDAY, *February 12th,* 9 P.M.

One sentence in your letter troubles me very much, my Adèle. It is the one in which you threaten never again to tell me of what you call your "little sufferings." Such little sufferings give me the greatest pain. I cannot tell you how much that cruel threat has troubled me; all the more because I feel, Adèle, that you will put it in practice, and fancy that you are

doing right in doing so. You say that you do not like to give me pain. Then, above all things, Adèle, you ought not to hide your anxieties from me—you ought to hide nothing from me. Oh, promise me—I implore you on my knees—promise to continue to tell me everything, absolutely *everything,* that you experience; promise me *that* in such a way that I can have no doubts about it. Do not leave me, my beloved Adèle, with this horrible uncertainty in my heart.

And who else, Adèle, should be your confidant when you are suffering? You cannot expect that I should see you suffer without suffering, too. Then, how can you have the courage to deprive me of that part of your confidence on which I set the most value? Do not be led into error about this, dear love, by a generosity which would make me miserable.

Think, rather, of the insupportable fears that I should have continually if I had to imagine that my Adèle, my adored wife, might be suffering from some cause, mental or physical, and had not let me take my share in it! If I am able, Adèle, to take some sleep at night and enjoy some peace by day, it is only if I can feel sure that you have no secret that is not known to me. Think, Adèle, how impossible it is that I can know that you are suffering without pain, because I love you; and think, too, what would be my misery if I had to imagine that you were hiding any one of your troubles from me!

Adieu, my adored Adèle; adieu, my wife, beloved angel! I cannot get accustomed to quitting you at eight o'clock, even if I come home to write to you.

The day will come (it is not now far distant) when this hour, instead of separating us, as it does now, will unite us more closely and more intimately. Adieu; I will try to dream about this happiness. Meanwhile, *je t'embrasse mille fois.*

THURSDAY MORNING, *February 14th.*

I hardly know what kind of a letter I might have written you to-day, Adèle, for I own I went away on Sunday evening melancholy, and not satisfied with you; but yesterday I saw you, and all the clouds have passed away. I was sad when I met you, but the unexpected joy restored my serenity. Let us forget it all. And I dare say you cannot yourself remember all that distressed me so much on Sunday. Dear Adèle, I am sure you would not amuse yourself by tormenting me in the few moments I can be with you, if you remembered that it is only when with you that I find happiness and repose. I cannot refrain from blessing the chance which led me to cross your path yesterday, at a moment when I had such need of a sight of you. The fermentation of spirit produced by a solitary life, of course, has its effect on my ideas. It had carried my depression to a climax. I hardly know what extravagant thoughts were surging through my brain when my good angel suddenly appeared before me, and offered me the only consolation for all my troubles. My only regret is that sight of me cannot possibly have produced on you the same impression, for I must have been looking like a ghost.

Adieu then, dear, until to-morrow.

FRIDAY, PAST MIDNIGHT, *February* 15*th*.

I shall not try, my dear, my very dear Adèle, to write to you about the effect your letter has just produced upon me. I did not expect to be so severely blamed by you and by all your family for a few words that no doubt escaped me in the heat of a discussion, in which, however, I think, if my memory serves me, I took the side of order and morality, though possibly with an exaggeration some, however, might have thought excusable at my age. I may have said many flippant things; I may have put forth many crude ideas. One phrase seems especially to have struck you. I perfectly remember that I used those intemperate words, and I was sorry for them immediately. I think, as you do, that the hideous, ignoble names of instruments of execution, and of the men whose business it is to use them, ought never to sully a man's mouth. I cannot think how I ever came to utter them. It must have been because I was stirred out of myself by the provoking remarks of those who were opposing me, and had lost my better reason, a sad result, to which such controversies too often lead. And that is one reason why, with all my heart, I detest discussions.

But what pains me, my Adèle, and has cruelly wounded me, is that any one could for a moment have supposed that such ideas, expressed in a casual conversation, could have thrown doubts upon our chance of married happiness.

What distresses me is that they could have induced you to share those fears, for I cannot think that you could have conceived them by yourself, since you

never have led me to suppose that you entertain a profound contempt for me.

Do you fully comprehend how bad it is for us to mix up ideas of *adultery* with our marriage ? No, it could not have struck you. Would that you really knew my character! Why could you not have heard, a short time since, the jests that were made upon me, because, when certain young men asked me if *I would not kill my wife if I should take her in adultery,* I answered simply that *I should kill myself.*

However, why should I tell you these things? I do not need, I am sure, to justify myself to my own Adèle, and the cruel letter that you sent me was not from you. Oh! my Adèle, can you think I would ever torment you? See, look into your own heart, and you will laugh at such a supposition. Do you not know I am your slave, your property, and that I would give a thousand lives to spare you one tear? Adèle, do not condemn me, I implore you, for a few inconsiderate words—I hardly know what they were—but judge me by the little you know of my heart and of my character. Good Heaven! can you have written thus? "*What will my fate be ?* I CANNOT TELL. *Last evening has left an impression upon me which it will be hard to efface.*" Adèle, should you not have remembered that such fatal words of doubt would be impressed upon my heart, as it were, with a red-hot iron? Oh! you can be very cruel sometimes, dear love! Again, you say I may feel for you *almost admiration,* when you know that I feel for you an admiration strong, deep, and entire, a worship of love, devotion, and enthusiasm? Ah! it is not you who

can ever have said that "*some day you might tremble before me.*" No; such ideas could never have come from yourself. Beware, I implore you, my noble Adèle, of adopting the suggestions of strangers; judge me with your own judgment, see me with your own eyes. I am already worth so little in my own sight that I grow indignant at the idea of becoming less so in yours.

You have reproached me with something else, and it is a reproach that I feel deeply. You say I see nothing but mediocrity in other people. In the first place, dear, I beg you to think that my supposed superiority is nothing in my own eyes. I look at things from a higher point of view. Worldly fame can never be anything to me in comparison with the angelic happiness laid up for him who will one day share your life. All I care for in this world is you; to you only I aspire; for you only I live. In general, it is true that the larger part of mankind are vulgar and commonplace; I think I despise them *en masse*, but if I encounter among them a few beings worthy of the name of men, I love and admire them the more. I place you, my beloved Adèle, at the head of all such beings.

I care very little, I must own, for what is merely conventional, for creeds held in common, for convictions that are traditional. This is because I think that a prudent man ought to examine things for himself, and use his own reason, before he accepts them. If he should make a mistake, it will not be counted to him for a fault. Well, possibly I am wrong in all my ideas, but I think I may say I have

not made the error of depreciating everybody. On the contrary, men look upon me as an enthusiast. The fact is that the life I am fitted for, if I can attain it, is one that will be quiet, happy, and obscure. I wish for nothing so much as domestic life and the care of a family. Why cannot you know me better than you do?

At all events, my love, your humility is charming, though it sometimes makes me angry. You say you defer to my opinions; but, indeed, thus far I have not seen that deference, and you on your part may have often seen what great confidence I place in your advice, and with what docility I obey you. I would even dare confide to you the whole management of my life, secure in the nobleness of your views and the grandeur of your soul.

Adieu; it is very late. I embrace you tenderly. What a delicious evening I have just passed with you! It makes me forgive your letter.

Adèle, love me; for Heaven knows that no one has ever loved as I love you.

Adieu. Try to read my scrawl. Oh! how much I love you, and how much you can sometimes torment me!

YOUR HUSBAND; YOUR FAITHFUL AND DEVOTED SLAVE.

SATURDAY EVENING, *February 16th.*

Adèle, I will not read your letter before I have relieved my heart of what is weighing on it now. Alas! I am not at this moment capable of finding happiness in anything. Yes, I left you with a full

and aching heart. There are moments when I realize why some men wish to die. You doubted me this evening. Adèle, you expressed those cruel doubts in a very cruel way. You told me — me, Adèle—*me*—I who adore you, whose life is linked with yours, whose heart is in thy heart—you said to me words that perhaps I have rather the sad right to say to *you*. You said, "*You do not love me.*" These words from your lips rend my heart like the most cruel irony, and I might add that they seemed like the most heartless ingratitude, if it were possible that you ever could be ungrateful to me.

Adèle, I would gladly do for you a thousand times more than the little I have been able to do. I would do all that I could find the means of doing. I would give up my future hopes, my blood, my life, my very soul; I would die in the most horrible torments if that could cause you a moment's happiness, and you would owe me nothing, not even a tear, not a sigh, not a regret; and if between two scenes of pleasure you deigned to remember for one moment the Victor who had died for you, it would be his sufficient reward, the only one he would have the presumption to claim from you. Do not think I am saying anything but what is deeply engraven in my heart. No, Adèle, you owe me nothing; you can never owe me anything, whatever I may do for you—not even a little gratitude. The absolute devotion with which I would sacrifice all I am to you is my first duty. I should deserve nothing for fulfilling it, and, I repeat, you would not even be ungrateful if you forgot me

the very moment after I had made my sacrifice. I should only have fulfilled my destiny.

I am, therefore, very far from reproaching you with having kept no remembrance of the few little proofs of love I have been able thus far to give you. I might die for you to-morrow, and you might not even notice it. The thing would seem quite natural to you. All I ask of you, Adèle, is, not gratitude, but pity. It is the generosity of your angel character that I invoke, entreating you never again to accuse me *of not loving you.*

I know very well that I have no claim on your pity nor on your generosity; but, Adèle, all I ask of you is to spare me a sorrow that I cannot bear, that of seeing you misdoubt me. I ask you this as a boon. If my words seem insincere to you, if you do not choose to credit my love, at least, I implore you, do not openly show me your disdain, but let me think that so many words of love, so many actions so long prompted by love, have not been thrown away, and that I have not lived without inspiring in your heart some little confidence in me.

Yes, if it was only to mislead me that you led me to believe you loved me, tell me so at once, frankly and pitilessly; tell me that you do not believe my words, that you care nothing for my love, and let me die. You reminded me this evening, Adèle, of all that you have done for me, of all that you would deign to do for me. Alas! the day when you let your glance fall upon me you did more for me than I could do for you if I gave you my life. You were quite right to ask me this evening what good would

my death do you. All it could do would be to bear testimony to the most ardent love that ever was inspired by a human being, who is, verily, the most angelic of all created things.

Adieu. When I consider that I can only offer you my death in exchange for one of your glances or one of your words, I am frightened at my nothingness. What am I in comparison with you? Adieu, my Adèle. Let me call you my adored Adèle, although you refuse to believe me. I suffer much. Only *you* could have cured me this evening. You would not, and your will be done! Adieu, angel. I am now going to read your beloved letter, to kiss it, and to kiss your lock of hair, all of you that really now belongs to me. Adieu.

SUNDAY, *February 17th.*

Your two letters, my Adèle, have filled my heart with joy and gratitude, and I hasten to write this morning a few words, to ask you to forget my extravagance and my folly.

Tell me, have you been suffering much during the night? I will consult an experienced doctor to-morrow, and tell him all that you told me. My dear love, either do not suffer yourself or let me suffer with you. Give me, I implore you, courage to bear your pain. The reason you are sick, Adèle, is because something must remind you that you are of the same nature as the rest of mankind. When you die you will resume your wings, but you will not die until after I am gone, for you are young, beautiful, and healthy, and God would not willingly cut short a life of virtue.

Adèle, do not talk to me of such melancholy things, which, happily, are most improbable. Remember, I am much alone, and ideas in my brain ferment in solitude. Adieu. Write me, I implore you, a very long letter, since we cannot talk to each other. But I must stop. I write twenty pages to you in my thoughts before my pen has traced one line. Adieu. I should be nothing but for the affection that you deign to feel for me, and the love I bear you. Love me always, and cherish some thoughts of me in your noble heart.

YOUR HUSBAND.

THURSDAY MORNING, *February 21st.*

Adèle, yesterday evening you repeated the reproach, which is so cruel on your part. You told me once more that I love you less than I once did, while it seems to me that every day I love you more and more. Certainly I do not write to you, I do not see you, as often as I wish. I pass very few moments in your company, and others, which I would most gladly consecrate to writing to you, I am forced—to say nothing of interruptions from many friends and the intrusion of acquaintances—to employ on four important pieces of work, my two pensions, my essay, and the romance I am writing.

It seems to me that a man so occupied ought not to be expected to comply with the minor obligations of social life, when his soul, as it were, is living in another sphere, a sphere of enthusiasm, of enchantment, and of love. For these are the feelings with which you fill my thoughts, this the ideal world you

have created for your Victor. Adèle, my adored Adèle! . . . And who knows but that this very evening you will reproach me for not loving you!

FRIDAY, *February 22d.*

My dearest wish, my beloved Adèle, is that you could know my heart, even as you know your own. Then you would be convinced that there is not (I will not say one of its emotions but) one single impulse in all my being that does not turn towards you. Even when absent, my soul and my eyes turn towards you; and sometimes I call aloud to you in a sudden transport. If I discover that I might by chance see you as you pass along some street, nothing prevents me from watching hours for your coming. Too often this is useless. If you appear, I am always near enough—though at a distance—to defend you, to save you from I know not what imaginary peril, for I am always in fear of such for you. You see, Adèle, I lay bare to you, without pity for myself, all my own follies. You, perhaps, will laugh at me.

Ah! no. Is it not true, my adored Adèle, that you will not laugh? But may it not be likewise true that from henceforth you will no longer accuse me of not loving you? Think over all my words, all my thoughts, all my actions, Adèle, and confess that it was a very cruel thing in you to have reproached me for a want of love.

Half-past Four.

In a short time I shall see you! How long that short time seems! At least, I can pass part of it in writing to you; that will relieve its tediousness.

I have been running about again all day. One has to take many useless steps before one can set one that is useful. Somebody said to me to-day, "You have everything that insures success, *except the good-luck to be unworthy of it.*" There is much sense in that, Adèle. It is worth thinking over. All sorts of people reproach me for not being pushing, intriguing, and so on; for not knowing how to solicit favors from a newspaper editor or a minister, for carrying what they call the *conscious pride of talent* so far that I seem to put no value on the possession of fame. For myself, Adèle, I cannot tell if I have talent, but I wish I could be worthy to have it, and, above all, I desire to be worthy of you. I own that I despise all by-ways to success. I think that fame and happiness are noble ends only to be reached by noble paths. I will do all I think I ought, and I will so conduct myself that my conduct may in every respect meet your approval. Tell me, my beloved Adèle, are not these thoughts your thoughts, you who are to sit in judgment over all my actions while you are the idol of all my thoughts? Ought I to despair of the future? I have never deviated from the road that I marked out for myself, and I am on the eve of obtaining the two pensions which will assure me the happiness of my whole life. Oh no! Let us have good hope, and let cowards and fools talk as they will. Adieu, angel; adieu, my adored Adèle.

YOUR RESPECTFUL AND
FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

SATURDAY.

Far from being displeased, dear Adèle, with your letter, it has made me very happy, like all those that you write me in a tone of truth and tenderness. How can you think that I should with any repugnance see you throw open your whole heart to me, when I desire above all things to be the confidant of your thoughts? Be thoroughly convinced that you may—I say more, that you *ought*—to tell me everything. It would be ungenerous on my part to require you always to speak to me of your affection, and never of your anxieties; besides, these anxieties spring from your affection. How, then, could they displease me? When you ask me how I spend my time, you are doing, Adèle, just what I should do in your place; what I should, indeed, have asked sooner had I been you. Do not, therefore, I implore you, wrong me so far as to take so many precautions to lead up to so natural a question, a question that I delighted to have you ask, because it showed an interest in my actions. Have you not a right to all my confidence, as I have to all yours? I wish you could ask me every evening what I have been doing during the day, because then I could have praise from you when I had been well employed, and blame when I had wasted my time. I feel sure that then very little would be wasted.

Dear love, I am charmed to see that you are not indifferent to what occupies me. I have been afraid you might be, and that is the only reason I have kept silent on the subject. What! may mere friends know what work employs me day by day, while you,

my Adèle, my wife, the inspiration of my genius, you who are all in all to me, are to know nothing! Why did you not speak to me on this subject sooner? Why did you so long leave me to think that the employment of my time and the nature of my work did not interest you?

Most certainly, I shall gladly talk on this subject with your father, now I know that this proof of confidence will please you. I have not done it before, Adèle, because it has never been my custom to speak first to others about my literary labors. I do not care to call the attention of others to what I am doing. It is a feeling of reserve that I know you will understand. When you live with me, when you take your place in the sphere in which I move, you will be surprised, dear, to find in me another Victor, a Victor you have never known, one of whom I have been reluctant to speak to you, because I loved best to be to you only your Victor, your slave, and your husband. Be very sure, my Adèle, that the one Victor will never hurt the other. It is only because I am so sure of this that I can tolerate in myself the existence of another individual whom you do not yet know.

I will not speak more clearly, for if I ever ought to lay aside all *amour-propre,* it is assuredly with you. However, if I must tell you the truth, yours is the only house in which I visit where my occupations are looked upon with complete indifference. You tell me it was discretion on the part of your parents. I understand that perfectly, and return them thanks. You remind me, dear, that "*six months have passed,*" and you add that these six months "*might have been*

more profitably employed." I cannot think that that was really what you meant to say, for I know you are too just to condemn me before you know the truth.

One other word before I begin to tell you what has kept me busy these six months. I shall talk to you, Adèle, of works begun, compositions merely sketched out, of enterprises, in short, which success has not yet crowned. I can speak of them frankly to you, who are all indulgence, and who will not love me less for having experienced a reverse than for having achieved a triumph; but you know it would have been presumptuous on my part to raise your parents' hopes on the result of works still in their infancy. This consideration, joined to that I have already mentioned, will explain my silence. Now I come to facts.

Last May the need I felt of expressing certain ideas which occupied my thoughts, and could not be well done in French verse, led me to undertake a kind of prose romance. My soul was filled with love, sorrow, and with the thoughts of youth; I no longer had you; I dared not confide the secrets of my heart to any living creature. I chose a mute confidant, my pen and paper. I knew indeed that this work would certainly bring in some money, but when I began the book that consideration was a secondary one. I wanted to pour out the tumultuous agitations of my heart while they were fresh and ardent, the bitterness of my regrets, and the uncertainty of my hopes.

I wanted to paint a young girl who should realize the ideal of all my fresh and poetic imaginations; a

young girl like her whom I had dreamed of in my boyhood, whom I had known when I grew up; pure, proud, angelical—it was yourself, my beloved Adèle, whom I wished to paint, in hopes of giving myself sad comfort as I traced the likeness of her whom I had lost, and whom thenceforth I could only see in a far-distant future. I wanted to place beside this girl a young man, not such as I am, but such as I wish to be. These two beings controlled the development of an event, partly historical and partly invented, which brought out a great moral lesson, which was the basis of the composition. Around the two principal characters I grouped a number of other personages, in order to vary the scenes and to make the wheels of the story go round. These personages were grouped in various ways, according to their relative importance.

My romance was a long drama, the scenes of which were *tableaux*, in which description supplied the place of stage scenery and costume. In all other respects the characters depicted themselves. It was an idea which the works of Sir Walter Scott had suggested to me, and that I wanted to attempt in the interest of French literature.

I spent much time in collecting for this romance historical and geographical materials, and still more time in working out the conception, in utilizing crude masses of information, in combining details. I employed on this work all my faculties, so that when I wrote the first line I knew what I was going to say in the last.

I had hardly begun to write the book when a terrible

misfortune befell me, dispersing my ideas and upsetting all my plans. I laid the work aside until I went to Dreux, where I had occasion to speak about it to your father, not as a great literary attempt, but as a good literary speculation. That was all your father wanted. When I returned to Paris I roused myself from my long apathy. The hope of belonging one day to you came back to me. I worked steadily at my book until last October, when I finished the fifteenth chapter.

At that time a great subject for tragedy came into my mind. I spoke about it to Soumet, who advised me to attempt it at once. I had begun to work when I received orders to prepare a *rapport académique,** which I mentioned to you at the time, and which kept me occupied until the end of November. Last December I made an ode on the plague, that the Académie des Jeux Floraux requested of me for one of its public meetings, and at last, on January 1st, I wanted to go back to my tragedy, when the same friend whom I have mentioned above came and proposed to me to join him in making a drama out of that admirable work, *Kenilworth,* which you have read. As this might bring me in several thousand francs, I accepted the offer, and consented to cooperate with him; and now, as I write this, I have finished the two first acts If Soumet were not so much occupied with his tragedy of "Clytemnestre," our play, of which I was to do three acts and he two, might have been finished in one month, and acted in

* This essay on *Gil Blas*, Victor Hugo was requested to write by François de Neufchâteau.

six. But it was to be anonymous. I consented to undertake the work, my love, only for your sake, and in order to prove to your parents that there can be a money value in letters.

Adieu. I am very much hurried. From this time, my adored Adèle, give your husband your entire confidence. I will show you my work if you take an interest in it; I will speak to you of my projects; I will even tell you of the annoyances caused me by my literary associates. Ingratitude and care for number one only are two sad things. Adieu; never fear you can be indiscreet. Your questions always give me pleasure. I love you more than any man has ever loved. Deign to permit me to embrace you.

If you can read this scrawl, remember that I am very busy. It is a quarter past seven, and I am not yet dressed.

Adieu, adieu!

WEDNESDAY.

To-day I have worked almost the whole time, dear, and I am afraid I have done nothing of any account, so I am sad and depressed. I am still absent from you, but I am not forgotten, am I, my Adèle?

I shall feel great joy in showing you all that I am doing, and all that I mean to do. Cease to feel any uncertainty on this subject. I would like to show you everything, were I sure that you alone would see it. But I know that is almost impossible. I only ask that you may judge my works without taking the opinions of any other persons, for it is your judgment only I shall care for. Your judgment alone I am eager to receive, and it will be of real value

to me. Therefore, condemn or approve according as things strike you. I shall religiously pay attention to what you say, as one would to the judgment of some angelic and superior being. When I know you are guided only by your own heart and your own soul, how can I fail to have a deep respect for the impressions you may confide to me? I always have thought that a man of letters ought to have one sole adviser, either a wife such as you are or a man of genius. For my part, I might make my choice among the last, but it is by my Adèle I desire to be judged without appeal.

THURSDAY.

I have read over what I wrote yesterday, and now, to come back to it, I beg you to tell me, in all sincerity, what effect, good or bad, has been produced on you by the writings I have sent you. They have, of course I know, many faults that the indulgence of my friends has not permitted them to point out to me, but those faults you will show me, my Adèle, when they strike you. Only try to take nobody's opinion but your own. You would have discouraged the author of *Les Martyrs* if you had spoken to him of his book as you did to me the other day, only assuredly you expressed second-hand opinions. The more I trust you, the more I mistrust others. Be, therefore, my adviser yourself. You can do anything with me. Let me owe you all.

Remember that if I am talking only of myself, it is to fulfil a wish that you expressed to me. I hope that you will not accuse me of self-love because I

show to that Adèle, whose good opinion is everything to me, unfinished sketches of some poor little works that I have undertaken. I wish you could know how heartily I desire that you should tell me frankly your opinion of them, though I tremble in advance as to what you may say.

I was very happy last Thursday at this same hour. You were near, very near me. I could feel your every movement; I could almost breathe your breath. I gathered up your words—all were for me. When will my whole life be like that? The moments of happiness passed beside you are moments of intense happiness, pure and deep-felt, I can assure you. As soon as they have vanished I regret them as if they were never to reappear, and when I look forward to their return, I long for them as if I had never before known them. I feel, when I am with you, a joy always immeasurably great, and always new. Such are the signs of an imperishable love. Your lightest word upsets me; sometimes it pains, sometimes it enchants me.

Adèle, those minds are very weak and those hearts very contracted that can doubt the eternity of love. In the depths of the soul that truly loves is a voice which tells it it will always love, for, indeed, love is the life of the soul. To any one who really thinks about it, it becomes a strong proof of our immaterial immortality. Do not look on these, dear love, as mere vain words. They are great truths, which lie beyond human life, that I am now laying before you; and in your heart, as well as in mine, there should be something that responds to them. These are vast

and magnificent hopes which make marriage an anticipation of heaven. For my part, when I think that you have been given to me, I am reduced to silence, for there are no words in human speech that can adequately return thanks for such a blessing.

SATURDAY, *March 2d.*

You said to me the other day something that struck me forcibly. That is why I must speak of it to you. You told me that you were not sure *that I was always good* (*que je fusse sage*). I begin by telling you that, if I thought you had been speaking seriously, I should make you no answer. It is because I feel sure that these words were said in joke that I give you here some explanation of the way I view the subject. I should consider as only an ordinary woman (that is to say, *a woman of small account*) one who could marry a man without being morally certain, from what she knew of his character and principles, that not only he was "*good*," but, furthermore (and I employ the word in its full meaning), that he was *chaste*. I mean, as much a virgin as herself. My opinion on that subject admits only one exception. It is that of a young man who, having once committed a fault, acknowledges it, with profound repentance, and with deep scorn of himself, to the woman he is engaged to marry. That young man would be an odious, contemptible traitor if he did not make that confession; and then the girl might forgive him, or not forgive him, without being the less estimable in my opinion.

I know, as I impart to you these ideas, that they

are not such as are generally held in this age and by this world. But what matter? I have many more of the same kind, and I am glad I have them. I think that the most severe purity is as much obligatory on a man as on a woman. I do not understand how one sex can repudiate this instinct, which is of all others the most sacred, and that separates man from animals.

You have sometimes reproached me, dear, with being very severe as to your sex. You see I am even more so towards my own, since I refuse it the license too generally granted. If I were to tell you that the rigorous observance of my duty in this respect has cost me nothing, it would be a falsehood. Often (I will hide nothing from you) I have felt extraordinary emotions of youth and imagination. Then I was weak; the holy lessons of my mother might have faded from my mind, but thoughts of you rose up, and I was saved.

Last Thursday I spent my evening with some other men. They were men of talent and of genius. But if I had had no real friends among them, their society would have wearied me. As we came out, these gentlemen, who live in clubs and *salons*, exclaimed that they had *never had so agreeable an evening*. Then I thought of my beloved Adèle, and said to myself: "I may have no genius, I may not have even talent, but I know more about happiness than any of these men." The evening they had found so delightful had seemed to me very wearisome compared with one of my happy evenings with you. In truth, Adèle, although my life has often been very hard and bitter, I would not

change it with any one. I should be both sick and dying if I did not feel that my sole happiness was to be loved by you, which is greater felicity than any other that human destiny could contain. When I possess you, what will anything else matter?

Adèle, you promised me your portrait. Have you forgotten it? I am very sorry that I have to remind you of it. Your portrait, drawn by yourself, was what you promised me. Do you forget you promised me that? Have you, indeed, forgotten, Adèle, one of the greatest joys you could have given me? Do you have no care for my happiness? I will not believe *that* until your answer reaches me. I would rather think that you have had no time to sit by yourself and work at it, not that you have been wanting in the wish to fulfil a promise so dear to me, a promise that should have been sacred in your eyes. I will wait, therefore, and not murmur at the delay.

SUNDAY MORNING.

You tortured me by setting me to discover what could have seemed to you *so extraordinary* in the letter I wrote you last evening. I have at last come to the conclusion that you allude to ideas concerning which I agree with you, that a young girl ought not to converse with a young man. On the other hand, I thought I was your husband, and, consequently, that I had certain privileges not given to others. It seems to me, besides, that there was nothing in my chaste reflections concerning my secret soul which should have shocked you. I gave you a proof of my highest confidence and my most profound esteem,

by laying bare to you the secrets of my soul and of my life—secrets that no woman but yourself has any right to know. What, then, has displeased you? What could I have said which seemed to you unfit to meet the ear of the most pure and virginal of women?

I was showing you how great is the power you have over me, since the mere thought of you can curb the effervescence of my soul. I told you that the man who should be so imprudent as to unite himself, sullied and impure, to a being all purity and spotlessness, would deserve contempt and indignation, unless he had first confessed his fault and incurred the risk of her rejection. What could there have been in such principles of severe virtue that could seem to you to call for reproof? Assuredly, I was far from expecting it. If I were a woman, and the man who was to be my husband said to me: "You have served me as a rampart against the seductions of other women; you are the first woman I have ever clasped in my arms, the only one I ever will press to my bosom; the more I would delight to draw you to myself, the more horror and disgust I should feel at any in like case but you," it seems to me, Adèle, that if I were a woman, such confidence on the part of one I loved would be very far from displeasing to me. Can it be possible that you do not love me?

Dear love, I should like to say something more to you about my conduct last evening, which you attributed to *vanity and self-conceit.* This gave me great pain, coming as it did at a moment when I thought I was acting in a manner that was proud, esti-

mable, and worthy of you. I meant to write about all that, but I find I have only time to beg of you not to be vexed at the grave tone of this letter, to say to yourself again and again how much I love you even when you are unjust, and with what joy I now see the dawn of that life which I shall pass with you.

Adieu; I adore you, I respect you, and I embrace you very tenderly.

WEDNESDAY EVENING,

This morning I sent off the letter which may lead to such important consequences.* Let us both think seriously of them. Possibly, my Adèle, we are on the verge of one of the most important epochs in our lives. Forgive me for writing *our* lives, and including you with me in a community of fate, when possibly I may make an end of myself, for I should do it at once the moment I found reason to fear it might not be for your happiness.

Now that my letter has gone, Adèle, now that I have done my duty by obeying one of your wishes, I will venture to tell you what I have not told you before, for fear I might seem to hesitate between my devotion to your will and a probable danger, even though this danger may involve the misery of all my life. I feel, indeed, that it was very natural that you should wish, at any cost, to be relieved from the uncertainty in which you live. I feel this so much that, two months ago, I made an attempt to forestall

* This was the letter in which Victor asked General Hugo's consent to their marriage.

your just impatience by suggesting to your parents to give me their formal authorization of our marriage, that I might communicate it to my father, going even further, and asking his direct consent. They thought otherwise, and I had to yield. When this same idea occurred to *you*, I thought it quite natural, and even proper, upon your part. Therefore, I took care not to tell you that I feared the result would be unfavorable, and I did not care to make you sensible of all its difficulties.

Now, let us both wait calmly, with a quiet conscience. Have you observed me — tell me — to be more depressed, less serene, since the moment when I possibly destroyed with my own hand all that I hoped for? No, dear love; the satisfaction that I take in thinking that I have obeyed you rises superior to any purely personal fear. In a few days all will have been decided, and whatever happens I shall be glad I did what I have done, since you will have been relieved from the uncertainty you find so painful.

If what I think I can foresee should happen, I shall have the consolation of knowing that I had expected it beforehand, and had resigned myself to the worst, without speaking to you of what I could not but apprehend, that I might give you another proof of my love and my submission.

If you continue to remember me a little while, perhaps it will not be with an idea that your Victor "never loved you much," as you sometimes tell him reproachfully. All my ambition, my beloved Adèle, is to prove to you my devotion. It is to that I conse-

crate my whole life, whether it is to last for sixty years, or only three months longer.

I therefore implore you not to be anxious. Things will now take their natural course. My letter will give them a sudden impulse over which I shall have lost control. I am no more master of the event than yourself. Among so many chances there must be one that would make us happy. I ought only to have spoken to you of that one. All the grief must be for me. It would have been too bad to warn you. You wished me to write. That was the only thing that I considered, and I have no merit in having done what was only my duty. And now, if all my happy dreams must pass away, I shall only have to follow them; but for you there will always be one great reality, which is, that you will have inspired a true, deep, and devoted love.

Now, my beloved Adèle, I speak of all this firmly and seriously, because the hour may be at hand when I have to confirm by actions what possibly you have only hitherto considered as vain words. It may be my life's last joy.

And yet things, possibly, may turn out well. It would not be the first time since I have loved you that my happiness seemed beyond hope. To have all turn out well is not probable, but it is not impossible. Dearest—my Adèle, forgive me for dreading misfortune after I had told you I was resigned. It is because my hopes were so precious and so sweet. We must wait.

Adieu till to-morrow. I will write to you. I love you better than you can ever imagine.

SATURDAY, *March 9th*, 4.30 P.M.

Just fancy, dear, that ever since early this morning I have not had one moment's liberty. I wanted to pass the whole day at work, and in writing to you, and instead I have been obliged to endure visitors. Pity me, and do not blame me. I had so many things to say to you; I wanted to tell you all about this week, whose beginning was taken up by that letter, and all the worries of the *bal du poëte.* How could you for an instant doubt, let me say it, *en passant,* that I should not go there, since you did not wish me to? What is it to me whether I stand well or ill with all those people? Only you told me that I did not feel as you do—and those words pained me very much, because you have been to such gayeties often when I could not be there (and quite recently to a party about which you wished to give me explanations). You feel now what I have often felt, and I thank you. I am very glad of it. Adieu, my Adèle; if there is anything sad in the letter I wrote you yesterday, remember there is nothing cold in it. Far from that; I never loved you more than I do now, when the inevitable hour for my sacrifice is perhaps drawing near. Adieu, adieu, my adored Adèle. I embrace you, and am to the last moment your faithful husband.

Do not be too much afraid. Perhaps all may turn out happily.

SUNDAY, *March 10th*, 10.30 A.M.

Since I may not see you, my gentle, generous Adèle, at least I may write to you. My heart is filled with gratitude to you, and with a feeling I do not like to

enlarge upon (for fear I may distress you), against those who made you cry. While I was standing near you, to all appearance cold and calm, I was boiling over, my Adèle, with impatience and indignation—let me say the word. To see you worried in that way, without any reason, you, the most tender, the very best of daughters—no, I cannot tell how I controlled myself. I wanted to lift up my voice, to protect you, to defend you, with all my strength, and in all my anger. Oh! how that would have relieved me! I should not now be sitting here oppressed with tears which, when you wept, I could not shed, and with all the words I could not say on your behalf which fell back on my own heart, and seemed to stifle me. Adèle, though your mother is kind, she does not see things from the higher stand-point at which you see them. In that she resembles other women; and for that reason I always heartily forgive her, except when her commonplace view of things leads her, as it did to-day, to torture my Adèle—my noble, my excellent, my beloved Adèle!—my Adèle, without whom there is no happiness for me in life, and even, I may say, no virtue; for I am attached to you, my angel, by every tie that can bind you to my soul, and in me all that aims at virtue, all that makes for happiness, is associated with my Adèle—*mon Adèle adorée!* And that is why the ties which bind me to you on earth will never break until all other ties to life are severed, and then my freed soul will be once more and more completely thine!

How sweet it would have been to me to take up your defence, to attack those who were distressing

you to-day! But I dared not lift my head to take your part, any more than I dared fall at your feet to console you. I should only have increased your mother's anger, and have made her turn on you reproaches which, possibly, she hesitated to heap on me. And yet, dear love, I would have sacrificed my pride most joyfully, if I could thereby have relieved you from what you were suffering. I would willingly have drawn down upon myself your mother's anger if I could have diverted it from you. But the fear of doing harm if I should interfere restrained me. At least, dear love, if my deep gratitude and my entire approval can be any comfort to you, you have them in full measure.

Adieu! I am going out, that from a distance I may see you in church. You will not see me, but I shall be there. I have done the same thing very often. Adieu till I come back; then, Adèle, I will go on. I feel less sad now that I think I am going to see you.

Half-past two.

Your little brother has just been here insisting that I must take him to the exhibition of pictures, but I am like you. I shall stay at home. My Adèle, you no doubt are tired and out of spirits at this moment; it always pains me to think that you are leaning on the arm of another man. But if I had known it would bring so much trouble upon you, I would have preferred to bear the pain, great as it is to me. If I could only think you feel the same repugnance to taking the arm of another man as I do to giving mine to any other woman, I could regret nothing;

but, Adèle, however much I may think of your tenderness, when I remember all the proofs of it you deign to give me day after day, can I ever believe that your feeling for me equals mine for you? Truly, when I look into myself, I dare not indulge in such presumption!

The painful scene this morning reminded me, dear, of some of the disputes I had last winter with my mother about things of the same kind. But my noble mother knew how to stop at the point when my resistance was growing painful to me.

My Adèle, forgive me for having spoken perhaps a little harshly of your mother in this letter. It was impossible for me to see you mistreated in that way and to keep perfectly cool; the fear of distressing you ought perhaps to have stopped me, but I did not think of that at the first moment. Forgive me.

Our conversation yesterday evening moved me greatly, and when I returned home your letter, so touching and so tender, deepened the emotion, until at last I fell asleep dreaming of you.

And at this very moment, my dear—my too kind Adèle!—our happiness or our unhappiness is being decided for us far away. Yes, I count upon your tenderness. I see, and I admire, your courage. Your devotion goes to my heart, but, I implore you, do not lose your rest because of me. In a few days perhaps I shall be a poor outcast, whom others will exhort you to forget, and whom you should forget, it seems to me, now that such forgetfulness might secure your happiness. I would say the same thing to you myself, but then those words would be the last my lips

pronounced. And yet, my adored Adèle, I shall have been very happy, in spite of my misfortunes—happy in having inspired a devotion like that you promised me yesterday. Alas! what dreams of life-long happiness must I not part with! I should have passed my life in loving you. To love you will have been the story of my life. I certainly ought not to complain of my fate.

Adieu, adieu, my beloved Adèle! Receive as many kisses from your husband as you have shed tears for him. *Je t'embrasse comme je t'aime!*

MONDAY, *March 11th.*

All my ideas are confused, and my brain is in disorder. Last evening the devotion, the tender words of my beloved Adèle, threw me into a sweet, sad train of thought, whose vague emotions I would gladly set down upon this paper, that I might show you what is my state when I am away from you.

Your image could bring me nothing but joy, if it did not renew remembrances of the past and bring me sad presentiments as to our future.

I have just taken out your lock of hair, for in the great and awful doubt which has taken possession of me in these last three days I needed something real, something which had been part of yourself, a palpable pledge of that angelic love in which you encourage me to believe still. For one moment I covered that dear lock of hair with kisses. It seemed to me, as I pressed it to my lips, that you were less absent. It seemed, too, as if a mysterious communication were established between us, that this dear

hair had become a link between two separated souls. Do not smile, Adèle, at the delirium which possessed me. Alas! so few hours of my life, my love, have been passed with you that sometimes I am constrained to try, by kissing your hair, or by reading your letters, if I cannot find some way to appease that immense need of your presence which seems as if it would consume me. It was by such artificial means that I contrived to exist during our long separation, but then hope every day, aurora-like, dawned before my eyes.

Hope! In a week—in three days—who knows if any vestige of hope will remain? Why does destiny change, when the heart cannot change?

However, whatever fate may have in store for me, Adèle, I am prepared to meet it. I will remember that you have deigned to love me, and what could I not meet bravely, strengthened by that thought? There is always one door open by which one can escape misfortune, and the day when my last hope is taken away I shall pass through it. I shall go where I shall commence another life, and however terrible it may be, I cannot think it will be worse than this one without you.

Adieu for to-day. Oh! I am athirst to see you!

At last the answer of General Hugo arrived! He gave his consent! He was even glad to give it, for he himself had to ask his son's forgiveness for a very serious thing. Three weeks after his wife's death he had married the person for whose sake he had left his family, and he had not told his children what he had done. Yet, even under such a cloud, sunshine dawned on Victor at the very moment when he least expected it.

As for Adèle, in a letter which has, unfortunately, been destroyed, she had given Victor the most convincing proof she loved him that could have been given by a girl so timid and so pure. She believed—nay, she knew—that if all hope were lost, if his father's consent to their marriage was decidedly withheld, Victor would be quite certain to take some fatal resolution, and she offered to give herself into his care, and to leave her home. Then, sooner or later, their friends would be forced to see them married. The reply of Victor's father rendered so great a sacrifice on her part unnecessary.

Victor was now officially recognized as the future husband of Adèle! And at his earnest entreaty, and in order that the two young people might not be separated, he was invited to spend the summer in the country as one of the family party of Mme. Foucher. An apartment was hired at Gentilly in a house which had a garden, at the end of which was a small detached house, where Victor established himself, but he was to take his meals in the company of her he loved; he could see her every day, and at any moment. . . . Nevertheless, they continued to write to each other! It might have been expected that interest would have lessened in their letters, but, on the contrary, happiness, and the prospect of more happiness, seemed to inspire the poet-lover with his most eloquent bursts of affection—we might almost call them hymns of joy—very ardent, and very beautiful.

There was nothing now to be waited for, before fixing a day for the marriage, except the bestowal of that miserable royal pension to which they looked forward. It was very slow in coming! This, possibly, was somewhat Victor's fault, for he could not bear to solicit favors and "run after ministers." We may also blame the stupid formalities and slow proceedings of the "Bureaux" for causing these young, ardent lovers to languish in uncertainty. Ever since 1819 the odes and articles written by the young poet in the interest of monarchy—the only lasting and sincere testimony we have to the fictitious enthusiasm of France after the return of the Bourbons—did battle for the cause of the Restoration, and it was not until three years later, in September, 1822, that he secured the poor reward of a

pension of twelve hundred francs, which afterwards was reduced to one thousand!

WEDNESDAY, *March 13th*, 3.30 P.M.

Adèle, my Adèle, I am wild with joy. To you my emotion must be first poured out. I had passed a week preparing myself to encounter a great misfortune, and happiness arrived instead! It has but one cloud.

Adieu for a few hours. I will bring you this letter myself this evening, my beloved and too generous Adèle.

FRIDAY EVENING, *March 15th*.

After the two delightful evenings spent yesterday and the day before, I shall certainly not go out to-night, but will sit here at home and write to you. Besides, my Adèle, my adorable and adored Adèle, what have I not to tell you? Oh, God! for two days I have been asking myself every moment if such happiness is not a dream. It seems to me that what I feel is not of earth. I cannot yet comprehend this cloudless heaven.

You do not yet know, Adèle, to what I had resigned myself. Alas! do I know it myself? Because I was weak, I fancied I was calm; because I was preparing myself for all the mad follies of despair, I thought I was courageous and resigned. Ah! let me cast myself humbly at your feet, you who are so grand, so tender, and so strong! I had been thinking that the utmost limit of my devotion could only be the sacrifice of my life, but *you*, my generous love, were ready to sacrifice for me the repose of yours!

Adèle, to what follies, what delirium, did not your

Victor give way during these everlasting eight days! Sometimes I was ready to accept the offer of your admirable love; I thought that if pushed to the last extremity by the letter from my father, I might realize a little money, and then carry you away—*you*, my betrothed, my companion, my wife—away from all those who might want to disunite us; I thought we would cross France, I being nominally your husband, and go into some other country which would give us our rights. By day we would travel in the same carriage, at night we would sleep under the same roof. But do not think, my noble Adèle, that I would have taken advantage of so much happiness. Is it not true that you would never have done me the dishonor of thinking so? You would have been the object most worthy of respect, the being most respected, by your Victor; you might on the journey have even slept in the same chamber without fearing that he would have alarmed you by a touch, or have even looked at you. Only I should have slept, or watched wakefully in a chair, or lying on the floor beside your bed, the guardian of your repose, the protector of your slumbers. The right to defend and to watch over you would have been the only one of a husband's rights that your slave would have aspired to, until a priest had given him all the others.

Adèle, when I gave myself up to this delightful dream in the midst of my unhappiness, I forgot everything else. . . . And then came my awakening; and then remorse for having for one moment conceived of such things. I thought of your parents, of your own peace of mind, and of your position, and I re-

proached myself for having shown you so little devotion as to have been so willing to accept so much, for having been so ungenerous as to consent to so much generosity, when my own dream had always been how to increase your happiness, even if I sacrificed my own! Then I cursed myself—I called myself the evil genius of your life, I remembered all the sufferings I had brought upon you, and I took that mad resolution that yesterday cost you those tears, tears I was inexcusable for having made you shed, and I went in search of a friend unhappy like myself, who, like me, had lost his last hope of happiness, and had nothing more to do with life but to endure its last pangs.

Adèle, oh, do not hate me, do not despise me for having been so weak and abject when you were so strong and so sublime. Think of my bereavements, of my loneliness, of what I expected from my father; think that for a week I had looked forward to losing you, and do not be astonished at the extravagance of my despair. You—a young girl—were admirable. And, indeed, I feel as if it would be flattering an angel to compare such a being to you. You have been privileged to receive every gift from nature, you have both fortitude and tears. Oh, Adèle, do not mistake these words for blind enthusiasm—enthusiasm for you has lasted all my life, and increases day by day. My whole soul is yours. If my entire existence had not been yours, the harmony of my being would have been lost, and I must have died—died inevitably.

These were my meditations, Adèle, when the let-

ter that was to bring me hope or else despair arrived. If you love me, you know what must have been my joy. What I know you may have felt I will not describe.

My Adèle, why is there no word for this but joy? Is it because there is no power in human speech to express such happiness?

The sudden bound from mournful resignation to infinite felicity seemed to upset me. Even now I am still beside myself, and sometimes I tremble lest I should suddenly awaken from this dream divine.

Oh, now you are mine! At last you are mine! Soon—in a few months, perhaps, my angel will sleep in my arms, will awaken in my arms, will live there. All your thoughts at all moments, all your looks, will be for me; all my thoughts, all my moments, all my looks, will be for you! My Adèle!

Ah! I can at last do something to assist my own career! With so much hope, what courage I shall have to work! With courage, what success may I not obtain! What a burden has been lifted from my heart! What!—was it only the day before yesterday! It seems to me a long time since happiness was mine. I have felt so many things these last two days.

And your letter last Wednesday evening. How can I thank you for it, my Adèle? I did not think that at such a moment anything could have increased my happiness, but your letter made me feel that there can be no bounds to love and joy in the human breast. What a noble, tender, and devoted wife is destined for me! How can I ever deserve her? Adèle,

I am as nothing beside you. The more I lift my head when I compare myself with other men, the more I sink in my own sight when I compare myself with you.

And now you will belong to me! Now I am called on earth to enjoy celestial felicity! I see you as my young wife, then a young mother, but always the same, always my Adèle, as tender, as adored in the chastity of married life as in the virgin days of your first love. Dear love, answer me—tell me if you can conceive the happiness of love immortal in an eternal union! And that will be ours some day.

This morning I answered my father's letter. There were two things in it which gave me pain. He told me he had formed new ties. My mother might have read what I wrote to him this morning. My excitement did not make me altogether forget what I owed to her memory. You cannot blame me, my noble love. Besides, I hope we may yet be reconciled. I am his son, and I am your husband. All my duty is comprised in those two relationships.

I do not forget that you told me that an account of how I had passed this week would be interesting to you. I own that up to Wednesday I tried in vain to work. The time was passed in struggling with my own emotions. I was full of thoughts of her whom I expected to lose, and all my ideas centred upon that loss. Yesterday I was able to work. Today I have spent in running from one ministerial bureau to another, a task I shall have to resume tomorrow, after having given all my morning to work. In the evening I shall be very happy.

My Adèle, no obstacle will now discourage me, either in my writing or in my attempt to gain a pension, for every step I take to attain success in both will bring me nearer to you. How could anything now seem painful to me? Do not think so ill of me as to believe that, I implore you. What is a little toil, if it conquers so much happiness? Have I not a thousand times implored heaven to let me purchase it at the price of my blood? Oh! how happy I am; how happy I am going to be!

Adieu, my angel, my beloved Adèle! Adieu! I will kiss your hair and go to bed. Still I am far from you, but I can dream of you. Soon perhaps you will be at my side. Adieu; pardon the delirium of your husband who embraces you, and who adores you, both for this life and another.

Your picture?

THURSDAY, *March 21st*, 9.30 P.M.

If you knew how I had passed my evening up to now, I think you might laugh at me. But no—for I have known that you are worthy to be loved even thus. While you are thinking of other things this evening I am going to write to you, and certainly, whatever happiness you may find in what I write, my happiness in writing will be greater still.

I will not speak to you, Adèle, of the party; you were there; that is enough. Be sure, dear love, you will have no cause to fear that tyranny about which you spoke to-day; never will I deprive you of an amusement on the pretext that I should not be there. I could not even think of such a thing, for if the day ever came when you found pleasure outside our

happy life, you would have ceased to love me; and what more could I say? As for me, when I stay away from a ball or a fête, where I know that I should not meet you, there is no merit in my absence. It is no sacrifice; it is just its opposite. I could not bear to go to a scene of joy where my own only joy would not be present, and where I should only weary for your presence; so by staying at home I am yielding to a selfishness which is simply the outcome of my love for you. I do not care to say more about such a trifle.

However, Adèle, if you knew that part of my life which is exterior and public, and of which you have at present only an imperfect idea, you might think that I sacrifice some pleasures for you. But as I really enjoy only one pleasure in this world, all others, whatever they may be, are nothing to me. Once only, and that a few days since, I accepted an invitation to a ball. I told you why I accepted it. Whatever my reasons might have been, it was my duty to tell you of them. You only said, what was very true, that you would not be there. It was for that reason I spoke to you about it. Though you have not hitherto always thought the same, you deigned to tell me that it would have been morally impossible for you to enjoy a fête where I should not be, too. These words filled me with joy, and settled my resolution about my engagement. I pretended I was suddenly taken ill. I did more; I feigned this evening that I was very sick. Nothing could have withheld me from giving this proof of my obedience, and saving myself at the same time from a weari-

some evening. You see, my dear love, that when I will a thing, I carry it out; and I know how to find reasons for doing as I think best, which cannot be set aside.

Adieu for to-night, my dear, my dearest Adèle. You will get home late and tired. May you have given a thought to me at your ball, and now sleep well. Adieu.

FRIDAY, *March 22d.*

Dear friend, let nothing I have written above pain you. I do not think that anything I said, without any thought of unkindness, can be unkindly interpreted, but I wish to prevent you from feeling annoyed, even if such a feeling appears improbable.

Alas! how could I dare utter a complaint against you, my Adèle, you who are so good, so tender, so generous, so noble, so entirely devoted and self-sacrificing? To all the other virtues of your highly endowed nature add all the noble and beautiful ones that have their source in love. How can it happen, dear and beloved Adèle, that a being such as you are should be, so singularly, surrounded by narrow minds and cold hearts? It is not on my own account that this environment afflicts me. What can it signify what such people think of me? It is for you, who are obliged to live among them and to have them treat you like an equal, when you are so immeasurably their superior. I suffer for you, my noble love, who are being incessantly scrutinized by their peering eyes, judged by their petty wisdom, tormented by their paltry tyranny. Indeed, you seem to me like a dove among puddle-

ducks, and I should laugh at such an unnatural combination did it not concern you. There are many types of animals among mankind.

Dearest, it would be useless to tell you how much the picture that you draw for me of our happiness at Gentilly has touched and delighted me, although it had already a place in my expectation and in my hopes. You must know, my dearest Adèle, that my imagination has not been less ready than your own to depict this felicity.

So great, indeed, does it appear to me, inured as I have become to constant suffering, that I look suspiciously, and almost with dread, into a future when I shall be free to enjoy without reservation. Young as I am, grief is for me an old acquaintance, and one whom I could not now renounce without cruelty. I have become so accustomed to painful resignations! Do not let us speak of such subjects any more. When the sky above is so clear and so beautiful, why should we ourselves create storms? The past is the past. Do not let us force it to return and mingle with our future.

Adèle, you have a Victor who loves you as no woman has ever been loved before, and who knows, because he is a man, that happiness can only be attained through labor and peril. Be of good courage, then. You will be my moral support in life, as I shall be your physical reliance. We shall not fail each other. A glance from you is sufficient to lead me in any direction; it can raise me to heaven, and it is able also to plunge me into the infernal regions. Yes, dear love, the power that you exercise over a

man who felt, even when he was a child, the necessity of being a man, ought to fill you with pride. I am not alarmed at your immense superiority to me, because it is the source of inspiration from which I derive strength to reduce the distance between us. Since my being is united to yours, it follows that it must accompany you and walk worthily of you. There are but few human ears capable of understanding the language that I use here in speaking to you, but I know no one on earth more deserving of being addressed through the heart and through the soul than yourself.

SATURDAY, *March 23d.*

At last I shall see you daily! At last we shall dwell under the same roof, while we live in anticipation of even greater happiness! Each morning, when I rise, I shall be able to see the first rays of the sun reflected on the windows behind which all that I hold most dear and most precious in this world will be asleep! I shall be stationed aloft upon that tower like a sentinel who watches over your happiness and your repose. I shall labor with more zeal, and with even greater delight, when I realize that she who is the reward of my labor is so near me.

Adèle, the only thing lacking to so great a happiness is the presence of her who would, more than all others, have rejoiced in it, for she was my mother; she loved me, and she loved you also, you to whom her son confides his honor and his felicity. Why did she not really understand you? Only, my love, because her observation stopped short at your sur-

roundings. She judged you by those whom you are far, indeed, from resembling; her penetration did not, like mine, extend into the depths of your soul. If she had seen you as I see you, so noble, so superior, so pure, she would certainly have loved and appreciated you even more than I, your Victor, am able to do. My continued and unchanging love for you excited her close observation; my deep esteem for you was slowly influencing her; and had it not been for the terrible misfortune that snatched her from us so prematurely, we should, perhaps, have been happy in her presence a year ago.

Forgive me, Adèle, for mingling such sad reflections with other and joyous thoughts; but you will not blame me for devoting one moment, before I abandon myself entirely to the exquisite enjoyment of our own hopes, to that beloved mother for whose memory you will one day, I hope, share my love and worship.

It is not she who would have imposed such singular and almost offensive restrictions upon our reunion. Holding us both in esteem, she would have considered it humiliating to herself had she oppressed our freedom of intercourse. On the contrary, it would have been her wish that we should prepare ourselves for the holy intimacy of marriage by lofty and intimate communion. She would have been aware that there is nothing in my most secret thoughts which could be dangerous to you, and nothing in yours but what would be useful and profitable to me. Your Victor would have consulted you upon all subjects; it would have been his de-

light to reveal to you, when alone, all the mysteries of poetry which touch so nearly the mysteries of the soul and of virtue, and into which you are so worthy to be initiated.

It would have been sweet to me to wander in the evening, far from all disturbing sounds, under the trees and amid the woodland, beside you, and in the presence of a beautiful night! It is thus that things for the greater part unknown manifest themselves to the soul. It is then that all the forms of nature seem ecstatic and divine, and that everything around us seems in harmony with the angel whom we love. In such moments, my dearest, human words are inadequate to embody what we feel; but you possess that rare intelligence which is able to comprehend all that is beyond expression. Your eyes, Adèle, are skilled to read all that others read in them. They understand the celestial language that they themselves speak.

For myself, I would have wished to study, in a delicious solitude, that soul which seems to me so exquisite in your beautiful expression, to watch all your emotions, to listen to all your doubts, to receive all your confidences. I should have hoped to strengthen myself with the sweetness and the depth of your conversation, to reveal to you all which your modesty renders you unable to appreciate in yourself, to arouse those lofty ideas which came into existence with you, but which, it may be, still remain dormant, and to show you what gratitude we both owe to God who called us into being.

These are dreams, it appears. We are never alone,

and, therefore, we are never together; for we must be alone in order to be really together. Besides this, no one in your home is capable of understanding the language which I long to speak to you, as I speak to a man of genius, and, indeed, to you much more easily; for such a soul as yours is far above genius. This language I speak here to you; and in doing so I have no fear that it will not be as clear to you as it would be strange and incomprehensible to limited minds and materialistic hearts.

Dear love, we are forced to reconcile ourselves to holding intercourse only through letters. Even so I shall be very happy, more happy than I had ventured to hope. I shall see you, I shall talk to you very frequently, and this constitutes happiness even if I am not to possess you, which is a future happiness that I am hardly able to imagine, but which, notwithstanding, is to be mine.

Adieu, my Adèle my dearest wife; I do not think you can complain of the brevity of this letter. You say that you have written to me more than I have written to you; listen, since the 8th of October, 1821, I have received thirty-two letters from you; if you have chanced to preserve those of mine, which date from the same time, count them, and I am confident that they will afford palpable proof that your reproach is unfounded. Consider, also, how long my letters are. Their length sometimes frightens me, myself, because I am doubtful whether you read them entirely. But yours I read, I re-read, I devour.

Adieu, although I have still a thousand things to tell you. Adieu, my adored Adèle. Sleep well,

and on waking bestow a thought on me, for there will be no place for me in your dreams until I shall inhabit my dove-cot.

Yet once more, *adieu,* and in saying so, I embrace you.

SATURDAY, *March 30th.*

I have certainly done a great deal of work this week, and I have attained very little by it, except a great deal of happiness. Certainly it is not I who will consider the present change a disadvantage. Still, I should be better pleased if I could unite work and pleasure. That is what will happen at Gentilly, and it is for this reason that I am so desirous of being installed there. There, there will, at least, be no more visits, no more letters, all my days will be filled with my Adèle, and with my work.

This last week I have seen you five days, Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. It is, therefore, one of the happiest contained in my remembrance. But why should it be that all the time which I might otherwise pass with you does not belong to me? The precious moments are consumed in comings and goings, and wasted on conversation; this is an annoyance, both to my heart and my mind; for when I am not with you I feel your absence least in a retirement devoted to labor; it seems to me, Adèle, that working for your sake is almost like being in your presence. It is true, however, that this wearisome time spent in travelling back and forth has also my Adèle as an object; therefore, I ought not to complain. But all this will come to an end, and nothing will remain, after these lit-

tle annoyances, but an immense and unalterable felicity.

I look forward with terror to the annoyances that will be entailed upon me by the publication of that ode, and consequently of that collection, if I decide definitely in favor of such a step. When I spoke, just now, of the happiness of Gentilly I did not have this in mind. All these accursed publications will interfere with my complete enjoyment for some time to come. They will oblige me to be so often in Paris, in order to see printers, to speak to libraries, to hurry workmen, and to correct proofs, etc., that I am not sure but that this consideration alone is sufficient to prevent my carrying the design into execution. What do you advise, my Adèle? I will do as you say. But remember that I speak now only of unavoidable embarrassments, and of those that the author must discharge in person. What would it be if I spoke to you of all the others that printing commonly entails?

But I am resolved to do nothing to force success. The habit now adopted by men of letters of going to beg for fame from the journalists I regard as unworthy of a man who respects himself. A great many persons consider this delicacy exaggerated, but I am sure that you will not blame me for it. I shall send my book to the newspapers; they will notice it, if they judge proper to do so, but I will not solicit their praise as though it were an alms. I have been told as an objection to this course that the newspapers have it in their power to make the success of a poor book, or to ruin that of a masterpiece.

I answer by giving examples of cases in which the trick played upon the public has been of short duration, and time has restored a proper balance; it is of much more consequence to me that the man who goes to another and says, *Praise me,* does a contemptible thing. If he is following custom, then I answer, custom is contemptible; and do you judge for me, Adèle, am I wrong?

Moreover, I have not, up to this time, taken a step to advance myself with a single journalist, and it is, perhaps, for this reason that the journalists accord me some measure of consideration. They respect a man who respects himself. I am sure that you will find these opinions very obvious, dear love. And yet —can you believe it?—they appear extravagant to a crowd of people who, in spite of this, are neither mad nor vile. Thus it is that the world adopts a thousand conventionalities which are often senseless, even when they are not revolting.

And, to take this occasion of speaking upon a subject of interest to us both, is there anything more ridiculous than the formalities with which it is customary to surround the holy ceremony of marriage? Upon that morning one is overwhelmed, fêted, bored. One is the property of every indifferent person, of all the world, in fact, except the being whom one loves, and to whom one is of importance. It is considered necessary to talk in a loud voice, and to laugh uproariously, as if it were possible to indulge in merriment at a moment of such happiness. A man who is deeply and truly happy is grave and serene; he does not display gayety. What do his surroundings

matter to him? His enjoyment is within himself, or even more within another, but that is all. When the soul is thus steeped in happiness, it fears to overflow; it makes no effort to include indifferent people in its gladness; it expands only to the soul that responds to itself, and which is a sharer in the same joy. Great emotions, Adèle, are mute; perfect happiness does not indulge in laughter, neither does absorbing grief find vent in tears.

These intimate mysteries of our moral organization, dear love, are as well known to you as to me; but it is surprising that they have been revealed to so few. This is because, among us, the social mind has altered the natural soul.

Thus, for example, instead of surrounding the happiness of two young people with shade and silence, it seems as though there could not be enough glare and noise to invade it; and to invade it is to profane it. What do fêtes, banquets, and dances matter to two hearts which love each other, and which are thus united? Can all these add another happiness to that of marriage?

Pardon me, dear love, but if I had my own way nothing of this kind would occur. Some beautiful day in summer, after having passed the happy hours together with some true friends, who would, even so, be unnecessary to our happiness, we would go in the evening to walk alone in the fields, full of sweet dreams and delicious emotions. A village church would appear before us. Your Victor would lead you to it; you yourself would have been informed of nothing; the altar would be adorned with

flowers; near the altar would be your parents and our friends, forgotten during our walk. A priest would come forward, and we should be united in a moment, as if by enchantment. Then we would return home, side by side. All our dreams of a pure, intimate, and noble union would be realized. Nothing profane would mingle with things so sacred. During the evening our sympathetic friends would respect the angelic peace of our felicity. The next day no indiscreet glance would disturb our happiness; no importunate word would probe the secret of our souls and of our lives, or, rather, of our soul and of our life. Adèle, this picture of our union transports me; if you love me, it will not be indifferent to you.

Oh, my Adèle! what does all this that I say to you matter? Even in the midst of the most insipid accessories the day of our marriage will be none the less the most beautiful day of my life, together with that day on which you deigned to own that you loved me.

Adieu, my noble, my gentle, my beloved Adèle. It is in no sense a humiliation for me to say that I am not worthy to kiss the ground under your feet. I do not know any one in the world who is worthy to do so; and yet, in your adorable goodness, you will permit me to embrace you, will you not?

YOUR RESPECTFUL AND FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

MONDAY, 10.15 P. M.

Dear love, I have just been cruelly defrauded of a sweet hope. I had arranged to be at liberty this

evening at half-past seven, in order to see you once more before the day ended, even though it was only while getting into the carriage. At a quarter past eight I was in the *rue du Temple,* for I thought that you would not go out before the half hour. Nine o'clock struck; I was still in the same place, and in the same attitude. In short, it was not until after nine o'clock that I lost all hope, being confident that you would not return so late. Thus, instead of following afar off the carriage in which you sat, and thereby returning content, instead of this happiness upon which I had counted, I was forced to retrace my steps sadly along the streets to my own gloomy house without having my Adèle before my eyes to relieve the way of its tedium. I am now writing to you, so that the day ends with a little happiness, and you must pity me for not having arrived a trifle sooner.

This long evening of useless expectation has carried me back to the days of our separation. The extravagances of this kind which I then committed would seem to you rather pitiable than acceptable, if, indeed, they ought not to be altogether hidden from you. Only, Adèle, when you tell me that I do not love you, think again, because whatever idea you may form of my devotion to you, you have, nevertheless, no conception of its reality.

I have something to say to you, Adèle, which embarrasses me very much. I am not fitted to say it to you, and I do not know how to say it to you. I can only commend myself to your indulgence, and trust you to regard only my intention. If you but

see it as it exists in my heart, you will appreciate it, and it is that which emboldens me. I wish, Adèle, that you were less afraid of soiling your dress, when you walk in the street. Yesterday is not the first time that I have observed with distress the precautions that you take. . . . I do not know whether you do so in accordance with views held by your mother, views which, to say the least, are singular, for it seems to me that modesty is more valuable than a dress, although a great many women think differently. I do not know how to describe to you, dear love, the suffering I endured yesterday, and again to-day, in the rue de Saints-Pères, from seeing passers-by turn their heads, and perceiving that she whom I respect as I do God himself was the object (unaware to herself) of impudent observation under my own eyes. I should have liked to warn you, my Adèle, but I did not dare, for I did not know what terms to employ to render you such a service. I do not mean that your modesty need be seriously alarmed, but such a little thing is sufficient for a woman to attract attention from men upon the street! Nevertheless, I beg you, dearest Adèle, to be careful henceforward in regard to what I say here, unless you wish me to box the ears of the first insolent bystander whose glance dares to turn in your direction; I have had a great deal of trouble both yesterday and today to repress the temptation to do this, and I will not answer for being master of myself another time. One thing is very sure, and that is that it is in great part to this impatience and this torture that you should attribute the air of annoyance

on account of which you have made me so many reproaches.*

I have hesitated a long time, my love, before speaking to you on this matter, which is somewhat delicate in its nature, but it seemed to me that your husband, who is your best friend, was the proper person to bring it to your notice, and that it was no less my duty to protect you from an insolent glance than from any other insult. It will, doubtless, be quite sufficient for me to have called your attention to the subject, and I am quite aware that you can have acted thus only from lack of thought, or from a too blind

* " . . . Marius followed Cosette with his eyes. . . . All at once a puff of wind more boisterous than the rest, and probably preoccupied with the affairs of spring, rushed around the nursery garden, burst into the road, encircled the young girl in a delicious blast, worthy of the nymphs of Virgil or the fauns of Theocritus, and in doing so blew aside her dress, that robe more sacred than those of Isis, almost as high as her garter. An exquisitely formed calf was exposed to view. Marius saw it. He was furious with exasperation. The young girl quickly lowered her dress with an affrighted movement, divinely modest, but none the less was he indignant. How could such a thing be possible? What she had just done was horrible.

" . . . Some one crossed the road. It was one of the *invalides*, bent, withered, and ghastly pale, dressed in the uniform of Louis XV., bearing upon his breast the little oval badge of red cloth ornamented with crossed swords, which is the soldier's cross of St. Louis, and further decorated with a loose coat without inside sleeves, a gray mustache and a wooden leg. It seemed to Marius that he discerned an air of extreme satisfaction about this figure. It even struck him that the elderly cynic hobbling towards him gave him a friendly and joyous wink as if chance had put them in communication, and they had some good joke in common. What had happened to occasion this dilapidated warrior such delight? What was the connection between his wooden leg and the other just spoken of? Marius gave way to a paroxysm of jealousy. 'It may be that he caught sight of it!' he said to himself, and he was seized with a desire to kill the ancient soldier."

obedience to your mother's wishes. What I say here will only afford you an additional proof, though an entirely unnecessary one, of that respect which falls very little short of worship. My dearest Adèle, I should be the very first person to honor your mother's goodness, as well as all her other excellent qualities, but I cannot help feeling that she is too indifferent towards certain conventionalities, while she originates, as it were in return, a great many others that are very useless.

For example, can there be a more pernicious maxim than that which you have quoted to me—*that a woman should be more reserved with the man she is going to marry than with any one else?* For myself, I frankly admit that it would, in itself, be sufficient to make me avoid a young girl who put it into practice. But you, my Adèle, you have an exquisite instinct, which teaches you all the proprieties. There is in your moral organism something which strikes me as miraculous when I consider how your soul has emerged, whole and pure, from all the false ideas which have surrounded it from infancy.

Adieu. You are an angel, and yet I dare to love you. Last Monday, at this same hour, I was very happy. Adieu, adieu. Sleep well. I will try to see you to-morrow morning.

I embrace thee tenderly.

THY HUSBAND.

Write me a very long letter, and remember the portrait, which, after yourself, will be for your Victor the most precious thing that he has in the world.

Victor Hugo, aged 28







THURSDAY, *April 4th.*

I had hoped to see you this morning at church. I waited for you a long time, and entirely in vain. I shall come back at three o'clock, and if I do not see you then, I shall at least have the consolation of having done for you what you would certainly not have done for me. This will be at once a consolation and a distress, for one always wishes to be beloved in the same measure that one loves.

You complain, dear love, that I write to you, so you say, less than formerly. It seems to me that this complaint is very unfounded. If I listened to my own wishes, Adèle, I would devote to the happiness of writing to you all the hours that I cannot consecrate to the happiness of seeing you. But this would be egoism, and you would be the first to remind me that all my hours should be employed usefully, rather than agreeably, and that I ought not, as yet, to think of spending all my time on things that are for my own pleasure. I assure you I am obliged to exercise all my self-restraint not to send you each week an immense packet, in which one solitary idea, that of love and marriage, is reproduced under all its forms and in all its phases. All occupations which do not lead me directly to you are without interest to me, and they must be of the most necessary kind for me to resign myself to pursuing them. Thus, when my days are passed in the most wearisome manner, in the midst of the multifarious business that is inseparable from a profession and a reputation, I recompense myself for all my fatigue by writing to you. I forget, when doing so, that

there is an external world around me, that it is filled with men moving to and fro in pursuit of good and evil, and with a constant procession of events, while the heavens above it are full of stars and of clouds; I forget everything, in short, to think only of her with whom, for me, this moral and physical universe is peopled, and without whom I should wander in it as in a desert. In these moments of oblivion, when the remembrance of you, and of you alone, dominates every idea, and when my thoughts can cling to you unreservedly and without distraction, it seems to me that I am enabled to contemplate the things of this earth from a lofty elevation. Then, just as I weep at those things which excite men to laughter, so I feel within myself an impulse to laugh at that which moves them to tears. At such times I am able to separate distinctly the animal in humanity from the soul, which is divine. The contempt aroused in me by wholly material griefs renders me the more sensitive to the slightest suffering arising from the heart.

Adèle, all these things of which life is composed take on a new face when one loves. When the soul is steeped in love, which is, indeed, its natural life, it acquires a new power by which to observe that world in the midst of which it is in exile. One becomes indulgent, because one is filled with the perception that if one is to be severe, one has need to be so ceaselessly; one recognizes that very few things on earth deserve hatred and indignation, and that one must regard the folly and baseness of the mass of mankind with very little contempt and abundant pity.

You are afraid that there is no steadfastness in my principles: reassure yourself, my love. It is not for me to be lacking in pity for others. I am too conscious of my own deficiencies, and I feel them above all when I converse with you, my beloved Adèle. More than this, you do not know how to imagine with what incredible tenderness I surround all my brothers in humanity. I accustomed myself early to seek in any evil which was done me for the motive that had actuated a man thus to injure me. Thus my anger is almost always changed in a moment into a continued and profound compassion. It even happens, very often, that I find a praiseworthy principle as the source of an evil action. And when this is the case, you will admit that there is little merit in consoling oneself for the injury received and in pardoning it. I return always to the thought that I cannot expect from ordinary mortals the perfection of my Adèle. After this reflection it is very easy for me to be indulgent.

Dear love, it is very remarkable that love has usually been regarded as folly, madness, a diseased condition, etc. Yet love teaches the most beautiful of philosophies. I have occupied you with very serious thoughts, but your mind must feel itself at home among them as in a native country; for I am sure that there is nothing in what I have here expressed so feebly that you do not feel as I do, and more than I do. It is only yourself whom I admit to these intimate meditations. They can be understood only by a heart which lives at the same time in both innocence and love. A child could not yet comprehend them; an

old man could no longer do so. It is this youth of the soul, Adèle, which we shall always preserve, if your affection for your Victor is eternal, as his tenderness for you will be.

Adieu for to-day. I am going to Saint Sulpice. Shall you be there?

FRIDAY, *April 5th.*

I saw you yesterday evening after all, and I am, therefore, altogether happy. What is this enchantress's spell that you exercise upon me? In spite of the fact that I now see you very often, your presence always produces the same effect upon me, and with the same force. If I perceive you at a distance, even at a great distance, as it was yesterday when I recognized you from the *rue d'Assis,* my heart beats and I redouble my steps, just as I did when I saw you only at long intervals, during brief moments, and thanks to long-watched-for accidents. My Adèle, do what I will, I cannot figure to myself what will be my felicity when we are united. Forgive me for so constantly repeating the same thing to you, but I have only one thought, and to whom should I say it if not to you? Adieu for to-day. I am going to employ myself in packing my trunk for that retreat in which so much happiness is in store for me. This evening I must undergo the weariness of paying some calls. *Adieu*; to-morrow the day will be beautiful to me from the moment that I rise, for I shall pass my morning in writing to you, and the rest of my day at your side. Adieu, adieu! I will not begin another line because I should not be able to cease, it costs me so much to leave the paper blank.

SATURDAY MORNING, *April 6th,* 1822.

I was much distressed and very indignant, on Sunday, dear love, to hear with what infamous slanders the memory of my mother has been soiled in your mind. I have implored you to believe nothing of the sort, and I have so conjured you because it is of vital importance to me that she who shares my life should not think evil of her to whom I owe that life itself. Adèle, if you have any esteem for your Victor, think that the woman who has been accused of such a vile calumny towards a young girl is she who nursed me, who brought me up; if this consideration is nothing to you, think of what excellent virtues this noble mother gave us an example in the midst of the greatest griefs. My mother complained very little, yet she suffered much. And while inspiring in her children a horror of the vice that wrecked her own life, she often said that her misery would itself create the happiness of those whom her sons married. Alas, that she was not permitted to witness the accomplishment of her prediction! I regret, dear love, that you did not speak to me earlier in regard to this imposture, designed, no doubt, to injure me in your esteem, for my mother's memory would then have been the sooner cleared from this odious slander. For, dear love, I do not doubt that you have by this time reflected on the baselessness of such an accusation. I will not, therefore, attach any importance to it. I will only tell you that I never heard my mother speak of your family or of yourself with angry feeling to a stranger; *on the contrary,* when by chance your name was

introduced into the conversation, which, to tell the truth, happened but rarely, she spoke of you only in terms of esteem and friendship.

I will tell you with the same frankness, that when my mother was alone with me, and saw me always sad, gloomy, and depressed, she sometimes gave vent to her distress in complaints against me and against you; but as soon as she saw clearly that my sadness was only increased by this she kept silence. I admit that she did all that she could, *with loyalty,* to banish you from my memory; she tried to distract me with the dissipations of the world; she would have liked me to intoxicate myself with the joys of self-love. My poor mother! she herself had implanted in my heart a disdain for the world and a contempt for false pride. She saw very plainly that everything palled upon me, because I had set my heart elsewhere than in joys that fade and pleasures which are evanescent. I never spoke of you, but she read in my eyes that I thought ceaselessly of you.

Why should this noble mother have been ambitious for me? Why did she desire for her son a prosperity which is not happiness? Among all the wisdom that regulated her own conduct, one wise perception alone failed her: she forgot that the soul cannot be nourished by riches and honor, and that life loses always in happiness what it gains in brilliancy. This error of my mother's will some time or other be a great lesson to me. Should I, in my own maturity, conceive well-calculated projects and worldly expectations for my children, I will not permit these to take precedence of their affections,

or of the inclinations that arise in their own hearts; provided always that I am sure of the purity of such inclinations and the nobleness of such affections. I would endeavor to direct my children by my own experience towards their greatest happiness, but I would never attempt to destroy that which is indestructible—a virtuous love in a pure nature.

Adèle, my beloved Adèle, you will share these cares, you will aid me by your counsels, and if ever (which is impossible) I should forget what I say here, and should wish to treat an innocent passion with severity, you yourself will remind me, my sweet Adèle, of what your husband at twenty years resolved for the father at forty. This will come true, will it not —this delightful occupation of studying our children in our own home, and observing their progress through what we have ourselves experienced; of seeing them live over, and live over happily, all the story of our own youth? Then, dear love, we shall be able to say, like my noble mother, that their happiness has arisen from our suffering.

Adieu, my Adèle; I shall see you in a few moments. This very evening I shall live under the same roof with you. Embrace me in anticipation of so much happiness. Adieu, my wife; adieu, my adored Adèle. I embrace you a thousand and a thousand times.

MAY AND JUNE

Residence at Gentilly

Monday, *May 6th*, 5 A. M.

How can you suggest, Adèle, that any other occupation gives me as much delight as writing to you,

I who, if I dared, would spend in this way every moment that I cannot pass at your side, in order that the nature of my happiness, only, might be changed? Frankly, I cannot believe that this reproach is serious on your part. Must I tell you all? To write to you is for me such an exquisite joy that all ensuing work becomes uninteresting and almost impossible to me. How can you expect me to pass tranquilly from an emotion at once so sweet and so profound to wholly indifferent considerations? How can you desire that I should attempt to paint imaginary joys and sorrows when I am still overflowing with my own sorrow or my own joy? Do not find fault with me, Adèle. You do not understand the peculiar suffering that is caused by the forcible exercise of one's imagination on a thousand different and indifferent things when one's whole being is absorbed in one single memory, one single idea. It is for you alone that my work is undertaken, from you always that my inspirations proceed; but although your image presides over all my thoughts, the nature of my ideas, which is necessarily varied, often necessitates its influencing them from a distance, on which account it only partially suffices me. Now, dear love, do not attempt to scold me for these confidences, and, above all, do not make me the most unjust of all reproaches—that of not finding pleasure in the thing which, from my own point of view, is its chief source. Oh, my Adèle, when will you believe in the extent of my love?

You reminded me in your last letter that it was a long time since I had spoken to you of writing to

me. This silence, which, in truth, has cost me a great deal, arose only from the fact that knowing you to be a great deal with your mother, I feared to seem uselessly importunate. I will not disguise from you that your complaint, although it had no foundation, was a source of pleasure to me. I perceived with delight that you had observed what had been so painful to me, and I own that I myself should have been keenly distressed if you had passed three weeks without writing to me, and without yourself perceiving the fact. I allow myself to be carried away, and I do not notice that the morning has passed without my having worked a little for my Adèle. My only happiness at present, my dear and very unjust Adèle, would be to be able to talk to you all the time that I am with you, and to write to you all the time that I am at a distance. But alas! it is always necessary to forego what one most desires.

Adèle, if you still doubt my love, I will ask of heaven but one thing more, and that is to show you, once only, my naked soul, such as it is, in its inexpressible tenderness for you, and then to let me die. Adèle, Adèle, no one in the world, not even your mother, loves you with a love that approaches mine, even at an extreme distance. This is nothing more than the truth, for no one knows you as I do.

Oh, how I love you! Will you come to me in the morning? The more I see you, the more I have need of seeing you. Adieu, adieu, my adored wife. Answer me if it is possible to do so. Your sweet letter of yesterday gave me so much happiness!

TUESDAY MORNING.

You wish that I should write to you before doing anything else, dear love! You have a great deal of confidence in my poor discretion to believe that, after I have enjoyed the pleasure of writing to you in the morning, I shall be able to accomplish anything in the remainder of the day.

When I write to you, as I am doing now, I begin where I ought to leave off; for this happiness should be the evening's recompense for labor, while, as it is, it will, on the contrary, make the work in store for me very onerous, by force of the contrast which must unavoidably arise.

I shall be obliged, however, to find strength to tear myself from you, my Adèle, in order to devote myself to some insipid correspondence and that eternal romance.* When will you, at last, be at my side to lend charm and interest to these wearisome occupations?

And yet, dear love, when I dream of that time I ask myself if I shall really have sufficient force of mind to devote myself to my occupation when you are always near me. It seems to me that I shall need a supernatural strength to refrain from passing the whole day in communion with you; it seems to me that I shall be able to occupy myself only in caressing you, in covering you with kisses and endearments. My angel, tell me, would you wish me to refuse to abandon myself to this intoxicating happiness, when I shall be free to enjoy it? It must be

* *Han d'Islande.*

you, dearest Adèle, who will restrain me when it is necessary, for never, no, never, should I achieve such a painful victory over myself!

But it is true, dear love, that the desire to see you rich and happy, entirely happy, is all-powerful with me, and that you will only need to recall me by a word, in order to make me deny myself at once the sweetest of all felicities. I wish to keep a little of this happiness in store by writing to you this evening. Therefore, adieu, for the moment.

May 12th, 5.15 P. M.

Dear love, I have just finished working, and I am going to anticipate by writing to you the happy moment when I shall see you. I own that when I reflect that I am still separated from you by the time required to fill this page and a half, I cannot glance over its extent without a certain terror. The happiness of writing to you is, after all, so very different from the happiness of seeing you! I do not know why it is, but the more I see you, the more I feel how necessary the sight of you is to my existence; every day I tell myself that it is impossible to be more perfect than you are, and every evening I go to rest with the conviction that I have discovered in you some new perfection. This state of things has lasted for such a long time, my Adèle, that it would of itself be sufficient proof that my love for you will never end. Oh, if you only loved me, how happy we should be!

When my thoughts travel back to that sad time, which is now over, and when I compare it with the happiness that I am so soon to enjoy, I stand amazed

at the distance that life can cover in so brief an interval. I believe that it is, indeed, but a step from the depths of despair to the height of happiness. And when I look back, from the point I have now reached, to the condition I was in a year ago, I feel like a traveller who regards with terror an abyss from which he has just escaped.

I say to myself often: Perhaps we have still many trials to undergo, many annoyances to bear, it may even be many griefs to endure; but it is impossible that we should ever live over again this terrible past. Our happy future has been paid for in advance by so much suffering, that one could not a second time endure such misery without dying. What does it matter to us, after all? Whatever trials may yet be in store for us, if we support them together we shall not suffer under them; is this not true, my dearest love? Ah! if you love me, Adèle, you will not deny this. But yes! you do love me, my adored Adèle, you do love me, since I live!

SATURDAY, *May 25th.*

I spent a happy day yesterday. Those fatigues that I endured for you and near you were sweet to me. When your lips approached mine, when your gentle hand, in wiping my brow, rested on my forehead, I would not have given those moments, Adèle, for all the happiness in heaven and earth. Sometimes I have moments of intoxicating happiness. At these times I ask myself what I have done to merit them, and I find that I am in no way deserving, and that all I have suffered is little, indeed, to at-

tain the blissful future which is before my eyes. I am worthy of you, my adored Adèle, only because I am sensible that no one can be so. At least, you will have in me a husband who will appreciate you and honor you as you should be appreciated and honored. What sometimes makes me believe that I am a little the superior of other men is that it is not given to them as it is to me to feel your angelic superiority. It must be that there is some faculty in my soul which is lacking to theirs. But in other respects, what am I that I should share your life? Nevertheless, Adèle, I shall share it. No, I cannot understand how such great unworthiness can merit and experience such great happiness.

I am going to see you in a few moments; in a few moments I shall know if your night was peaceful, if you think of me both sleeping and waking, if you felt during this long morning a little wish for the arrival of that hour which must unite me to you. Adèle, for myself, it is these ideas which completely fill my life; or, rather, there is only one idea which does so. *Does she think of me? Has she thought of me?* And if ever an inner voice should answer *no,* if ever I cease to possess the consciousness that you love me, Adèle, then I shall cease to exist, because my existence will have no further sustenance, because my soul will no longer have any mission among the souls of men. Take care, Adèle, for what I say to you is the naked truth, and I do not believe that you could ever desire my death.

Adieu, my adored angel. I embrace you tenderly. Answer me as soon as you are able to do so. Adieu.

MONDAY.

I wish, my adored Adèle, that I could tell you all that is passing in my soul at this moment. You would not say to me then, as you so often do, that you are unhappy. I wish that I could seize the vague and sweet reverie which that transitory moment of delight occasions me. Ah! when will you belong to me, my angel, in the sight of all men? When shall I be able to enjoy every moment of the day this happiness which has just escaped me like a dream, and other happiness even greater still? I can hardly believe, in truth, that this will be possible; but, nevertheless, it shall be so, for a day will come when my caresses will no longer be cut short by the alarm of my Adèle, and when, perhaps, she will deign to return those of her husband. Oh, shall I not then die of happiness?

I wish that you could know with what idolatrous devotion my whole being prostrates itself before yours, with what a profound sentiment of respect and love I kiss the ground beneath your feet. Yes, Adèle, nothing of all this is exaggerated; these are truths only too feebly expressed. What have I done that God should graciously permit me to be loved by an angel, by my adored Adèle? Adieu, my happiness, my life, my joy, adieu; I embrace you, and I embrace you yet once more.

PARIS, WEDNESDAY MORNING, *June 5th.*

My dearest Adèle, the first time I see you I should like to throw myself at your knees, and kiss the ground under your feet. If you knew what happiness your

letters afford me, and with what courage they inspire me, you would spend all the time in which we are not together in writing to me. For myself, when I write to you, I wish to let my pen follow the dictates of my own heart. It seems to me when I take up this sweet occupation it will be easy to me to tell you all that is in my soul; but I am suddenly surprised to find that I cannot express what I feel, and what I wish to say. Adèle, all that the mere thought of you causes me to feel is inexpressible. You fill my soul as if I had a divinity, a heaven on earth, for myself alone. I wish, sometimes, to adore you with idolatrous worship, my Adèle. You inspire me with all the tender, noble, and generous sentiments of which your own nature is composed. I respect you, I venerate you, I esteem you, I admire you, I love you to the point of adoration; and when you tell me to repeat often that I am your husband, you cannot divine what is the extent of my joy and of my pride! Oh, yes, I am your husband, your defender, your protector, your slave; on the day that I lose that conviction, I am assured that my very existence will cease, because there will no longer be any foundation for my life. Adèle, you are the only person to whom I can confide all that within me which desires, loves, and hopes—that is to say, my soul itself.

If it is of any importance to you to spare me a lively distress, do not, I implore you, dearest, repeat to me again that the proofs of tenderness and devotion which you deign to bestow upon me can ever inspire me with any other sentiment than that of the deepest and most respectful gratitude. If you only knew how

great is my delight when I find that she to whom I have confided my happiness confides, in her turn, in me; when you allow me, without fear, to enfold your pure and virginal form in my arms, it seems to me that you could give me no higher proof of esteem, and I cannot tell you how great is my pride in being so esteemed by an angel like yourself! Therefore, your husband ventures to hope that you will not be inexorable, and that if you love him, you will not refuse him a few mornings like that happy one of the day before yesterday. I entreat you so earnestly.

SATURDAY, *July 20th.*

Take care, Adèle, not to accuse me again of not caring to write to you, or I may henceforward spend all my time in doing so. You tell me truly that I can easily devote an hour to an hour and a half each day to writing to you, and you would be right, if an hour or an hour and a half were sufficient for me to write to you in. You do not know, dear love, after what long meditation I begin these letters. It seems to me that when I converse thus with you, I cannot sufficiently search the depths of my soul. If I listened only to my own perpetual thought, if I gave free play to my pen, I should write to you continually that I loved you, and always that I love you, unless I devoted myself to describing to you all the sentiments that this solitary, this splendid idea arouses in my heart; otherwise, Adèle, these letters would be simple repetitions one of another.

This explanation has doubtless wearied you, but now that it has been given, dear love, do not again

repeat a cruel reproach, which ought not to present itself to your heart, because it is cruel, nor to your mind, because it is unjust. You, who are so kind and so gentle, you would not wish to give pain to your Victor? And I ask you, Adèle, my darling, how can you doubt for a single moment the happiness that I enjoy from pouring out thus in these letters all that can be expressed of the inexpressible love that I have for you?

You do not know, Adèle, what a weight was on my heart during the sad period of our separation—the burning passion that I was obliged to keep sealed up in my heart, and which devoured me. Do you recall or have you still the first letter that I then wrote you? Alas, Adèle, do you remember what a welcome you, at first, accorded it? . . . I do not blame you, my angel, for you knew very little of me in those times. It is a year to-day since I arrived from Dreux. Let us not complain of heaven. To-day I am very near to my happiness, and on the day of that arrival I was far from believing that a year would suffice to place it within my reach. Oh, my Adèle, forgive me, for I am doubting you, and I believe that all my happiness is disappearing. Forgive me! for you have sufficiently proved to me that your beautiful soul is made for all the noble virtues of a constant, pure, and devoted love. Oh! how I love you! how I have always loved you! And why should I complain of life, since I have found in it an angel like yourself as a companion?

RETURN TO PARIS*

TUESDAY MORNING,

I have just awakened, my Adèle, overcome with sadness at not doing so in the same house with yourself. You will not be able to comprehend how long and unbearable the days spent at Paris seem to me. All my time is a desert; all my days are empty, notwithstanding they are filled with a multitude of distractions that certainly did not follow me to Gentilly. Alas, Adèle, when shall I have you always beside me? At this moment you are far from your Victor; your attention is given to others; you think no longer of our happiness at Gentilly; you laugh, perhaps, while he whose thoughts are absorbed by you is here alone, sad, and yet thinking with distaste of the moment when he will be obliged to cease being alone, and to leave off appearing sad.

The day before yesterday, at the same hour, how happy I was! Why should such moments pass? Why cannot two human beings who love each other spend their lives in each other's presence? Adèle—oh! I wish to believe that this happiness will be granted us. I will believe it, for otherwise I should flee from the long future which I have still to live through. But why, if this happiness is in store for your Victor, may he not enjoy it now? Would the prompt fulfilment of our destiny derange in some respect the fate of other men? Or is it a matter of consequence to the Deity that our eternity of happiness should begin a few months earlier or later?

* They only returned to Gentilly on rare and brief occasions.

When I think of all this, I am ready to murmur like an idiot. If there is an exceptional case, it is mine; and yet I complain! But tell me, my dearest Adèle, is it not excusable to abandon oneself to impatience when one is awaiting the day on which a life, that has hitherto been so full of suffering, will be united to that of the purest angel who has ever existed? Yes, Adèle, it is as impossible to exaggerate in speaking of you as in speaking of the love which you deserve and which you inspire. Alas! and yet I was capable of causing you to shed tears the day before yesterday. . . . Angel, at such moments I am very much to blame, but I entreat you to believe that I am also very unhappy. I cannot tell you all that passes within me when I see my adored Adèle weeping on my account! And if this happens in a moment of happiness, oh, then what I feel is beyond expression. It is both heaven and hell.

Adieu for this morning, my Adèle. I am going to see you soon for a few minutes. That is a happiness that I enjoy a long time in advance.

WEDNESDAY EVENING,

You cannot realize at this moment, dear love, how much good those few words of yours caused me! You will be pleased, for you love me, and it must, therefore, be sweet to you to perceive with what passion I love you in return. Do not tell me, however, that I shall never understand to what an extent you love me. What affection cannot I comprehend, Adèle, I who love you with a love that is infinite and eternal? Love me as much as I love you, my angel,

and we shall enjoy the most perfect happiness that life can contain.

How can you fear that I should ever desert you? No! my dearest Adèle, your husband will be your companion in joy and sorrow, until death, and beyond it. This is the thought which fills his soul and inspires him with confidence. Adieu, my adored Adèle. I will conclude to-morrow. I am going to kiss your letter and the lock of your hair. That will, perhaps, enable me to sleep as I hope you are now sleeping at this moment. Adieu.

THURSDAY MORNING,

I will not tell you that my first thought is for my Adèle, for, as I think and dream continually of you, I can offer you neither first nor last thoughts, but the single thought which alone dominates my soul and my whole life. And you, Adèle, have you slept well? How I weary to see you, to read what you wrote to me last evening! I hope that you have no further distress, or, at any rate, that you will have none this evening when I see you. Oh, my Adèle, I shall not see you till this evening! I had formed the habit of happiness by seeing you often, and every day, and this sweet custom only renders me unhappy in Paris.

THURSDAY EVENING,

Alas! . . . My Adèle, it is with this word that all my letters should now begin. I am very unhappy. It seems to me a bad omen that I should see you so seldom, and only in the midst of so much embarrassment. Perhaps I should believe—and I

adopt the idea eagerly because it comes from you—that I have not yet sufficiently paid for the immense happiness which is so near me. I have indeed suffered greatly, but I am going to be so happy! Ah, no suffering could pay for this felicity.

Adèle, alas, I do not know how to tell you of the state of my soul. I think of our future happiness which is approaching, and I am sad! Dear love, you are at this moment the victim of so many annoyances, so many cares! Angel, the handkerchief steeped in your tears is not yet dry. How can I think of joy?

And this guarantee which is forever promised, and which still does not come! Adèle, must I own to you my weakness? These delays are torturing me at present, because they disquiet you. I have confidence only in your confidence, as I have joy only in your joy, and pain only in your pain. Dear love, when I think of those who are, perhaps, holding my happiness in both their hands, I experience inexpressible emotions of rage and grief. Yes, rage! Oh, the man who obliges me to delay for one month the happiness of possessing you will not be acting in his own interest. The happiness that comes to me through you, Adèle, is sacred. Cursed be he who interferes with it, or who ever shall interfere with it!

Adieu for this evening. To-morrow I hope to be able to continue. Why cannot I write to you without ceasing? Why am I obliged to work?

FRIDAY,

I have very little time before me, dear love, for it is nearly six o'clock. I have just finished my work

and dined. My whole day has disappeared without my being able to write to you. All my days, Adèle, are sad now, and insipid. Keep up your courage, I entreat you, for my own is very nearly exhausted. I had three such happy months before this sad one! I had become accustomed to happiness; I almost believed it was life itself. And now I am forced to resume this insupportable existence, which so cruelly recalls to me the past year. I must lay aside those habits which it was so sweet to me to learn, and I must resume the habits which it had been so sweet to me to abandon.

But even at Gentilly, where I was so happy, Adèle, something was lacking; everything was lacking! I shall only be perfectly happy when I can pass all my time at your side; and you will remember that this was very far from being the case at Gentilly. And yet, what would I not give to be there still?

I remember with delight my walks to Arcueil, and to Bourg-la-Reine, etc. I recall our water parties, where I had the happiness of steering the boat which carried you; I recall often, with joy, and yet with inexpressible sadness, those little brief visits which my adored wife deigned to make me during the mornings in my happy tower. I live again within myself those moments of intoxicating enjoyment. Oh! tell me that they will return, my darling Adèle, and that they will then bring us an even greater happiness, a more complete felicity. . . . Forgive me for saying *we*, but you yourself wish that I should believe in your love, and how, indeed, can I live if I do not

believe in it? Adèle, I would give twenty years of my life to be only two months older!

TUESDAY, 8.30 A. M.

I wish to relieve myself this morning of some moments of annoyance, and of one annoyance in particular. What are you doing at this instant? Have you slept well, my Adèle? Are you thinking of me? Are you writing to me? What are you saying to me? What is in your thoughts? Ah! is it right that I should be forced to ask these questions of myself at every moment of the day? Ought I not to be continually in your presence? It is really true that I am conscious of my soul and of my life only when I see your face and hear your voice. At a distance from this happiness all is dark around me, and I am, in a certain sense, indifferent to my own identity. I see objects move around me, I hear sounds enunciate themselves, but nothing interests me, and only something of an unusual character can draw me from this apathy. If conversation goes on around me, I dream undisturbed; if I am directly addressed, I answer incoherently. Adèle, it is you who are the cause of this unbalanced condition, and it is you who are also its remedy. Let me believe, I implore you, that you think of me as I think of you, that you love me as I love you; repeat this to me continually, and do not refrain from repeating it, if you wish that I should love that life which is so sweet to me with you, so terrible and so insupportable without you.

FRIDAY MORNING,

Are you writing to me at this moment, or are you at least thinking of me, my Adèle? I am very much cast down; I am in sore need of you at my side, with your sweet voice and gentle glance. It seems now such a long time since our happiness at Gentilly! What is going to become of me in this great Paris? All my time, which at Gentilly was divided between the happiness of seeing you and that of working for you, is now being wasted, without happiness, and almost without exertion. You may say, and with truth, that I am here in a much better position for conducting all our affairs, and that for this reason my time will not be lost; but obligations which take me away from you are to the last degree uninteresting.

I do not know that I am justified in writing you at the present moment, Adèle. I am deeply depressed, and I cannot shake off this depression. I repeat to myself all that you said to me yesterday evening, in hopes of comfort, especially that we shall see each other every day; but I had formed that sweet habit of being near you at all times, absent or present, of sleeping and waking under the same roof with you, of taking my meals at your side, of feeling your hand touch mine, of waiting upon you. . . . Alas, my Adèle, must there be nothing of all this henceforward? I must resume my old manner of life, I must again become restless and solitary, while the house which contains you might be in flames without my being on the spot to save you in my arms.

You will treat such ideas as madness, and you will be perfectly right, for my love is constantly seek-

ing from my imagination fresh occasion for anxiety and alarm. But you must know, as well as I do, my beloved one, that souls which are endowed in a high degree with the capacity of loving, create for themselves, at every turn, miseries which other souls do not understand. I am now in one of these moments of overwhelming depression. I desire to work, and yet my mind contains nothing but a vague uneasiness and regret for our lost happiness at Gentilly. Two months hence, it is true . . . But two months last a long time! Oh, my adored Adèle, reanimate me with courage for these two long months; love me a little as I love you; write to me often, my Adèle; speak to me constantly of all with which my thoughts are filled, and love me, love me, for then I shall never be unhappy.

Adieu; pardon this illegible writing, and accept a thousand kisses from your poor husband, from your Victor.

9 P.M.

Adèle, it seems to me that an age has passed since I saw you. I cannot imagine to myself that yesterday at this very hour I was near you. Yesterday I was entirely happy. Oh, when will all my moments, each and all, be passed thus? When shall I be every day your companion? When will it be in my power to watch over every hour of your existence, waking and sleeping? Dear love, it seems to me that the more nearly this happy, and thousand times happy, period approaches, the more my uneasy impatience redoubles. If you could only know all that passes in my soul when I think of you, and of the immense

happiness which is to come to me through you! I seek in vain for means of expression; my thoughts are all confused, and my mind is nothing but a chaos of love, intoxication, and joy.

In truth, I fear that day when I shall be able to proclaim in the face of all men: She is mine, entirely, exclusively, eternally mine! Yes, I fear that on that day my being will give way under so much happiness. So much joy entering violently into my soul must, so it seems to me, completely overwhelm it. What a moment that will be when I shall enter into all the happiness of my whole life, that happiness which for so long a time has been held out to me without my being able to reach it! My solitude will then be pervaded with an angel, and it is she who will put an end to my isolation! And when I think that this well-beloved angel permits me to believe that she also looks forward a little to that day towards which all my desires, all my efforts, are so ardently directed, then I forget all the cruel trials that I have endured, to dream only of the intoxicating future that is promised me, and I acknowledge that all my sufferings are as nothing in comparison with such great happiness.

Adèle, the time will soon come when I shall enjoy in your presence the rights of a husband and the duties of a slave. I shall have it in my power to protect you and to do you service, to dissipate all your griefs with my caresses, to dry your tears with my kisses; or, rather, you shall then have neither griefs nor tears. You will be happy, will you not? and my joy will repose in yours. If troubles over-

take us—and in this respect let us have no illusions, for they will surely come—they will be of no moment, because we shall bear them together, or, rather, because your smile will enable me to support them. For in all the occurrences of our future life your part will be to console me, mine to protect you.

Now, I am going to count up the days until that when I may expect to receive the voucher for my pension, notwithstanding that I have been warned that the delay may last another six weeks. No matter; I feel as though all the offices must hasten their work, because I expect to be happy at its conclusion. All this savors of madness, but what would you have? It is you yourself who are responsible. Why have you caused your Victor to lose his reason?

In truth, ever since our marriage became for me the most certain thing under heaven, I have been surprised that each moment should be detained by the business that belongs to it. I ask myself how it can be that the realization of the purest and most ideal hopes should be retarded by an obstacle so material as money! Yet so it is. It is like seeing a cloud bound down with an iron chain.

Adieu, my adored Adèle. Forgive me all my wanderings, send me to-morrow a long letter, and receive in exchange a thousand kisses from your husband, from him whose idol and whose angel you are.

MONDAY, *August 5th*, 9 P.M.

Dear love, I have just read your letter, and I am as happy as it is possible for your Victor to be apart from you. My only regret—and it is a regret of the

keenest—is that I did not see you take this letter from your bosom. It seems to me that I enjoy a double happiness when I can kiss both the characters that your hand has traced and the paper that has touched your bosom. Do not laugh at my folly; it really seems to me that a letter which has lain near your heart-beats partakes of something deeply mysterious and exquisitely tender.

MONDAY, *August 12th*, 10 P.M.

My dearest Adèle, you are suffering at this moment. Since I cannot see you, I am about to write to you. It may be that this unexpected letter will procure for you to-morrow a moment's pleasure. Alas! I am much to be pitied for not being near you at a time when you stand in need of support. How fortunate are those who surround you!

Oh, my Adèle, if you knew with what emotion I have just seen once again the deserted chamber, so distant from that in which you will sleep! I was far from being completely happy, even at that dear Gentilly, and yet it is always for me an ever-present grief that we left it.

You distressed me very much yesterday, but since you are ill, I will not reproach you. Yet I could not refrain from observing, with pain, that when we were driving you kept your eyes closed nearly all the way. Great heavens! my Adèle, I do not blame you. You were suffering, and if this relieved you, you were right to do so. Only if it had been I who was suffering, it seems to me that I should have believed myself cured by fixing my eyes on you. However that may

be, my dear, my dearest love, I repeat that you were right to close your eyes if it relieved you, and I will complain of nothing, provided I find my wife completely restored to-morrow evening.

Adieu for this evening, my adored Adèle. I hope that you will sleep. Accept a thousand kisses from your husband, who is truly very sad.

MONDAY, *August 19th*, 1-2 A.M.

To see you only for a couple of hours a day, after so much happiness recently enjoyed at Gentilly! Dear love, this in itself would be sufficient to make me miserable, but it seems to be necessary that even when I do see you my delight should be poisoned! It is not enough that we should be separated, but your sleep must be disturbed, your nights broken.* . . . And, notwithstanding this, what reward do you obtain for your care and your trouble? I must own that in the few moments that I spend with you my patience is very nearly exhausted. I have restrained myself, but it has required all my dread of creating annoyance for you to achieve this painful victory over myself. All my being revolts when I see you, my Adèle, my dearest wife, the object of indirect and unjust reproach, or of unreasonable demands.

No, I am not willing that you should lose your rest, that you should sacrifice your health. Reflect, my dear, good, too good Adèle, that this is just the same thing as sacrificing my health and my re-

* Mme. Foucher was then near her confinement, and her daughter often sat up at night with her.

pose. I desire that you should sleep every night, for otherwise how can I sleep, knowing you to be keeping watch? I ask you to have pity on yourself, from pity to me. This may be egoism, if you will, for in all that concerns you I am an egoist. I suffer through you, just as I rejoice through you.

THURSDAY.

Do not doubt, dear love, that we have a special destiny in life. We enjoy that rare intimacy of the soul which constitutes the happiness of heaven and earth. Our approaching marriage will be only the public consecration of another marriage, that ideal marriage of our hearts, of which God alone has been the author, the confidant, and the witness. There are moments, Adèle, when I am uneasy at the thought that our exquisite union will some day be made public. It seems to me the secret of our happiness is a happiness apart. I should like to hide it from the eyes of men: they would be envious of it.

Oh, Adèle, what a glorious future is that of the being which heaven has associated with yours! If it be true that in the existence of all mankind happiness and misery are equal, then I cannot conceive a misfortune sufficiently great to balance the happiness of possessing you! Or, rather, dearest Adèle, I know of only one misfortune—a terrible misfortune—which can punish me for having enjoyed such happiness. Alas! I conjure you to take the utmost care of your health. Reflect, my adored angel, that my life is entirely yours; remember that I fear only one misfortune in the world, and that one I shall not survive.

Alas!

FRIDAY, *August 23d*, 8.30 P.M.

It is only by writing to you that I can console myself for not seeing you; my thoughts, which are at present so sad, will at least reach you, my Adèle. How happy I should be if that which occupies my mind at a given moment could at the same instant be transported to you. Perhaps I should find in your thought some remembrance of me. . . . Perhaps? . . . Forgive me for having said *perhaps*, dear angel, for you have told me that you thought of me without ceasing, and since you have said it, it is so. Ah! do I not need to be permeated with this conviction, which is like that of my own existence? Is not my love all my life, and if you ceased to share it, what would that life be?

Alas, at this very moment, my Adèle, you suffer, you are uneasy, you fatigue yourself, and you look forward to further fatigue at night. Oh! can it be that your repose, your sacred sleep, must be disturbed without my having the right to protect you from it? You will make an outcry, you will blame me, you will invoke your filial tenderness. Dear love, I cannot find fault with you, but may not I complain as a husband of what you do as a daughter? Can you believe me capable of looking on calmly while I see your precious sleep sacrificed, your strength exhausted, your health injured? And all this in order that you may fulfil duties which three other persons ought to share. No, I will complain; I will complain incessantly, and, moreover, I will not be silenced. Why cannot I take upon myself three and four times your burdens in order to spare you?

Come, my Adèle, I am very deserving of pity. So many nights do I spend at a distance from you. Is that not sufficient distress without having it added to by continual uneasiness as to the manner in which you spend yours? It seems to me that I see you every minute, suddenly wakened, torn from your repose, forced to dress yourself in haste . . . dear love.

You know, Adèle, that you are not your own; you know that you are accountable to me for all your actions, and even for the impulses of your heart. Do not waste your health, which is my wealth, I beseech you . . . !

Alas! you will not listen to me, and that is what reduces me to despair. You imagine that you are at liberty to use and abuse your strength, that you are mistress of your own actions. . . . Ah, recollect what you bestowed upon me, in giving me your love. Do not laugh at my fears, I conjure you, since they are torture to me. You are only a woman, my Adèle, although you are an angel, and you have not sufficient strength to support sleeplessness and fatigue. Your plan for passing the nights, when your mother is confined, alarms me; it alarms me so much, indeed, that I do not dare to believe it.

I kiss you a thousand times on your adored lips.

YOUR ANXIOUS HUSBAND.

MONDAY, *August 26th*, 9 P.M.

It would be very sweet to me, Adèle, to spend the whole night in writing to you, as I have already done so often; but in order to do so I should be obliged

to renounce another happiness equally dear to me, namely, that of dreaming of you, and I prefer to divide my night between these two felicities. Moreover, in doing so I shall obey you, and that will be an additional pleasure.

Dear love, if you knew how great is the happiness of my dreams! . . . Often the most enchanting illusions transport you, my adored Adèle, to my side; your husband presses you to his heart, your lips touch his, you respond to his caresses! All his being, Adèle, is in unison with yours! . . . Then I am awakened, by very excess of happiness, to find vacancy! My empty room, my Adèle far away, and all the sad reality! Then, dear love, I am as much to be pitied as I was before to be envied, and it seems to me that I pass at once from heaven to hell. It is at these moments that my courage needs to be roused by the thought of that day when so many delicious dreams will no longer be dreams and beyond my reach.

Alas, Adèle, dreams were for so long a time my only happiness! During our long and sad separation I had nothing in the world except the sweet falsehoods of night and of sleep. Those nights, if my sorrow allowed me to sleep, were indeed the only happy portion of my life; it was then I realized that the cruel misfortunes of an innocent love are tempered by that innocence itself. It seemed to me at that time, when my days were so sad and so lonely, that all the happiness of my soul was contained in my dreams. You appeared to me always in sleep, and if sometimes these delightful dreams

were mingled confusedly with sad remembrances, still at least you were there, and your image spread its charm over all. You appeared to me as the witness of my suffering, the consoler of my pain, and in those cherished dreams I blessed the very sorrows to which I owed the happiness of being consoled by you!

But how terrible was the awakening! I lost everything; even hope itself, almost. While now, even when you vanish with my dream, I retain the most delightful, I will not say of hopes, but of certainties. In a month, my Adèle! Do not you find this same month very long? Forgive this presumptuous question. For a moment I was carried away by the idea of being loved by you as you are adored by me. Dear love, you have permitted me to believe in such great happiness; you have even ordered me to do so; but I dare not entertain the thought. You will, perhaps, chide me. . . . Oh, do so, my love, chide me, but say to me, repeat to me, that you love me as I love you. You are well aware, Adèle, that it is by such words that I live; you know that all my existence depends on yours; you know that there was a day on which you held my life in your hands, that day when I dared to tell you I loved you, and when you deigned to answer me. . . .

Adèle, that rapturous answer decided my love, my destiny, my eternity. Only you yourself can tear it from my heart, for, Adèle, you alone have the power to deprive me of the riches which you bestowed, of your love. This is the same thing as telling you that my life is at your discretion. Do to your Victor

what you will, provided always that you love him. That is the single necessity for his happiness. Everything else is of no account. And thus I, when I perceive that you are for a moment cold or dissatisfied, my sweet Adèle, I experience such pain as I do not know how to describe. It seems to me that I almost cease to exist, for my soul is ill at ease. A tender word from you restores me to life, and that is what has happened to me this evening.

Adieu. I have carried away with me as my farewell that which was lacking to me yesterday—the comfort of a sweet good-bye, and I am going to sleep well; that is to say, to dream in silence. When will my existence as a widower cease? Still one long month, and this month will have thirty days, each one of which is an age, and every one of those days will have twenty-four eternal hours.

Adieu, my adored Adèle. You are sleeping now, and it seems to me that I see you in repose, your charming eyes closed, your hands folded on your breast, those hands which I have so often covered with kisses; and I seem to see your fresh, pure breathing rising and falling regularly at intervals from those lips on which I am not permitted to press my own.

Oh, Adèle, when, then? . . . In a month, is it not?

TUESDAY, *August 27th.*

Adèle, when a sweet expression comes from your lips, accómpanied by a gentle smile, you cannot imagine the impression that is produced upon your Victor! If you only knew how small a thing that pro-

ceeds from you is sufficient to make me happy! . . . Sometimes when I am near you I am afraid of being carried away by a sudden access of madness. When I hear you speak with such nobleness and tenderness I experience an overpowering temptation to seize you in my arms or to kiss the hem of your garment. At such times all the crowd of indifferent people who surround us vanish from my sight. I no longer see any but you, you, my angelic Adèle, my adored wife, you, a heavenly and adorable young girl, and it requires all my strength to repress the impulses of an almost convulsive passion. You know nothing of all this, my Adèle. If at one of these moments I express to you my secret and overmastering idea, you do not observe the excitement of my looks, and you answer me with a smile and in a tranquil voice. Oh no; you will never comprehend the violence of my love. . . . Alas!

VICTOR.

WEDNESDAY, *August 28th*, 2 P.M.

I shall see you this evening, my Adèle, only this very evening. I shall bring you good news, which might indeed be better, but then I was afraid of something worse. A reduction of two hundred francs does not alarm me.* It will be only so much more to obtain by my own exertions. Moreover, it is possible that the Pension Department of the Interior may take pity on us. And then—must I tell you the truth, dearest Adèle?—it is high time that I should be happy. I was

* The promised pension of 1200 francs was reduced to 1000.

beginning to yield to my equivocal position. I was sometimes inwardly alarmed at a future which offered me nothing on which to fix my will. It was unbearable to me to see the greatest and noblest happiness constantly recede before my eyes by reason of that miserable pension. . . . The latter was of value to me only on account of the former. It is, indeed, a singular circumstance in our lives that we have for so long been forced to mingle money considerations with the affairs of the heart. Now, now everything shows that this intolerable necessity is about to cease.

Oh, what a happy day will be that on which your Victor will no longer be obliged to enjoy happiness only in dreams!

THURSDAY, 9.15 P.M.

I can only repeat to you what I have already said, and that which your own charming letter of this evening says so sweetly. I act at all times, my adored angel, as I should act in your presence. All my thoughts are known to you—they are, indeed, only one thought. But how is it possible that you can ask me seriously on this, the 29th day of August, 1822, to give you my entire confidence, when that confidence is entirely yours, and has been so, ever since I have had a confidence to bestow? My Adèle, are not you already in possession of all my soul, all my life? Listen to me, then: My whole soul is Adèle; my whole life is Adèle. And how can you imagine that I should have—I—anything concealed from you? Are you not much more mine than I am yours?

Oh, let us always tell each other our slightest

griefs, our smallest joys! These confidences, this exquisite intimacy, are both the right and the duty of love.

It is in such confidence, as in the jealousy of which we spoke yesterday evening, that the essence of true love lies. I am speaking, Adèle, of that pure and tender jealousy which is perfectly reconcilable with respect, esteem, and enthusiasm for the object of our love. It is this sentiment which you have observed in me a thousand times, for I am proud to own that it forms part of my affection; but I have never been able to detect it in you. Adèle, I do not blame you; I am no more worthy of your jealousy than of your enthusiasm, but I should have been so exquisitely happy to have been worthy of them, and it is the conviction that I cannot boast of possessing them that has always caused me to tremble for the reality of your love.

Alas, in spite of this, there are in your letter some very tender words, and in what you said to me this evening there were some delightful expressions. . . . O Adèle, if only this happiness is really and truly mine! I long to sleep with this idea.

I embrace you here, delighted as I am to have found an expression so tender at the conclusion of your letter. I embrace you, and I tell you that you are an angel!

SATURDAY, *August* 31, 1822.

Do not pity me, Adèle, for the evening of the day before yesterday. Although I felt very keenly the distress which was occasioned me on your account, yet, oh! I beg you, my dearest Adèle, console me

always in this manner for tears which you cause me to shed. I would not now exchange the grief which you caused me, although it was in truth very keen, for the happiness of angels, since it was the means of procuring me a letter so affectionate, and consolations so tender. Dear love, yes, that distress was very severe. Tears exhaust me greatly. Those who weep easily are comforted even while they weep; but I have no such good fortune. Tears that I actually shed are indeed a relief; but for the most part they remain shut up in my heart, and suffocate me. My mother trained me from childhood to restrain all such emotion and repress it within myself, for she foresaw the value of this to one alone in life.

In spite of this, Adèle, it is very sweet to me to pour myself out to you. Fatigue and suffering endured for you are nothing; but if I see you sometimes divine and pity them, then, my adored Adèle, they are dear and precious to me.

MONDAY, *September 2d.*

I have just finished working, and dined. The few moments that separate me from that in which I shall see you again seem to me very slow in passing. At least they shall be employed in writing to you, so that this happiness shall be mingled with my impatience, and will, perhaps, restrain it.

What have you done to-day? You must have thought of me all day, for, as you yourself said yesterday, so happily, if you could be a moment without thinking of me, it would be the same thing as not thinking at all. How happy it makes me, dear love, that it should be you who have said this! It is an

inspiration from your angelic heart which I welcome with the keenest joy. If you spoke to me always in this manner, Adèle, you would never find me doubt your love. There are some expressions that only become possible when one loves, and this, which makes me so happy, is one of the tenderest that a true affection can utter.

Adieu, my dearest Adèle; we are going to converse together, during a few short moments, in regard to our fast-approaching happiness; I am going to hear your dear voice, to see your adored face, perhaps to snatch secretly a kiss or a caress from you. This expectation transports me with happiness. Adieu, then, or, rather, *adieu* is not the right word, since I am going to see you once more after a long day. YOUR HUSBAND VICTOR.

THURSDAY, *September 5th*, 9.15 P.M.

My darling Adèle, I returned home this evening with a headache. It was occasioned by a very trifling thing, *but a very trifling thing* that concerns you, Adèle, means a great deal. Yes, I am sad, and all your tender words cannot dissipate my sadness; your sweet caresses of this evening cannot remove the impression that your farewell left with me. When I approached you, and heard you say as I left you: "*To-morrow at six o'clock!*" there was nothing that showed me this interval of absence would appear very long to you, as it does to me. Adèle, I do not know whether it depends upon you to abridge it, but it certainly rests with you to render it less insupportable to me by not appearing wholly indifferent to it.

A word, a gesture, a sign of regret, would have been almost sufficient to console me, yet at this moment, in addition to the pain of being so long separated from you, I endure that of thinking that you yourself do not feel the separation.

Do not remind me here, Adèle, of all that you have deigned, and will still deign, to do for me. Great proofs of devotion may be inspired by simple generosity, but it is in things of no account, in words and in looks, that love reveals itself. The strongest proofs of love are in a multitude of trifles imperceptible to any one but the person beloved. It is in the slightest movements, in the prompt, spontaneous inspirations of the soul, that its whole revelation lies. Generosity, alas! does not supply all this, and all that you do for me may be, perhaps, nothing more than the result of a generous pity, for there is no certain indication which proves it to be love.

You are going to exclaim, to blame me, to reproach me with ingratitude . . . All this, Adèle, may be still only generosity. Some sign of indifference escapes you spontaneously. It wounds me spontaneously also. I am weak enough to tell you of this distress that you have caused me; a simple feeling of kindness and compassion leads you to make reparation for the pain you have given, and in order to do this, you employ the only efficacious means—namely, words, or outward tokens of tenderness. All this proves to me, what I have said already, that you are kind, compassionate, generous, but in no sense does it show me that you love me.

I foresee, Adèle, all that you are going to say to

me to make me change my opinion, because I know the excellence of your heart; but this miserable thought has been for a long time in my soul. Nothing can remove it. You sometimes lull it to sleep by strong protestations of love, but more often you arouse it by little marks of indifference. Adieu. It is high time that this letter should end. I am really unable to write more.

To-morrow, then, *at six o'clock.*

Recollect, above all, that I ask for nothing but what is in your heart. Whatever it may cost me, I desire you should show yourself to me such as you really are.

SATURDAY, *September 7th,* 4.30 P.M.

I must write you a few words, my dearest Adèle. You must be made aware how much emotion and delight your sweet letter occasioned me. I read there what, to my great distress, you did not tell me in the evening—that you were sensible of my absence from you until *six o'clock* at night. . . .

I longed to write to you yesterday evening, but I was under the necessity of getting on with the romance, and I worked upon it far into the night. I did so again all of to-day, and now I am rewarding myself by writing to you. But I must close. I ought even now to be at your side. Adieu, my dear angel. Why should words fail me when I attempt to tell you the extent of my respect and adoration for you? Oh! yes . . . I embrace you, and I embrace you again. YOUR FAITHFUL HUSBAND.

Can you read this scrawl? I write with a pen which is not worthy of the name.

MONDAY, *September 16th*, 9 P.M.

Dear Adèle, I am very sad this evening. I do not know what has become of my ideas; my whole mind is in disorder, and I am completely overwhelmed. It is a fact, then, that for a week or ten days I shall be almost completely cut off from you? * I shall scarcely have a moment's glimpse each day of her whose presence is my joy and my life. Yes, Adèle, your glances are necessary to my existence. I need to be able to rest my own upon you, upon you, who are my only riches, my only treasure.

This evening I am possessed by one of those indefinable moods of depression which only possess me on your account. It seemed to me that you were very little absorbed by the thought of our approaching separation. It seemed to me you might have warned me that we were about to be parted. Nothing in your face or in your words during the whole evening gave me cause to suppose that we should pass a week or ten days almost without meeting, and yet you were aware of it, Adèle, for you speak of it in your letter.

See, dear love, these are the signs that make me doubt your love. You tell me that these doubts distress you, and, therefore, I will not speak of them. But, nevertheless, it is a very painful thing for me not to have been warned that this evening was a farewell. You said the word to me with a tranquillity that reduced me to despair. Not that I blame you, Adèle, for our speedy separation, but you made me

* Mme. Foucher had just been confined.

feel that it was time for me to leave in order that you *might enjoy some repose,* and I cannot believe that you were not answerable for this. What distresses me so deeply is the gayety that you displayed during the evening.

God forbid, however, that I should ever wish to see you disguise or constrain your feelings! I should prefer that frank air of pleasure, even at a moment when I am myself very sad, than a grief which was assumed. Be always for me outwardly what you are inwardly, for I should prefer to be grieved, as I was this evening, by an excessive gayety than to be rendered desperate by a simulated depression. After all, hypocrisy is so far from my noble Adèle that this advice is unnecessary. You must not see in all this anything of the nature of a reproach. If you were conscious of no distress at knowing that we should be separated for so long, it is not your fault, my Adèle. I felt at once that you were very excusable for having forgotten your Victor, among the number of things that have claimed your attention. For myself, I have passed through keen and bitter grief, I have been overwhelmed by complicated business affairs, and by pressing anxieties; but never has your adored image ceased for a moment to possess my soul. But can I expect as much from you? Who am I that I should do so?

Adieu. I am very, very sad, but on reading over your letter, and, above all, the line which concludes it, I am a little consoled. Adieu, my cherished angel, my dearest wife. I embrace you tenderly.

TUESDAY, *October 1st.*

I have just finished working. I am going to write to you for relaxation. This sweet occupation is the reward of my serious exertions. It is a happiness with which I long to fill all the moments that are not devoted to the happiness of seeing you.

But, my Adèle, each time that I write to you a fresh struggle takes place in my heart and in my thoughts against the insufficiency of words. Something is always lacking in my letter, and that *something* which I fail to express is, nevertheless, exactly that which I most desire to reveal. Adèle, it seems to me that if you love me, you will be able to read spontaneously in my soul; but if you love me, dearest angel, you must know all that I yearn to tell you, you must be able to supplement the failure of those words, *love, adoration, idolatry,* to picture what I feel for you. There must be something within your heart which reveals to you all the unspeakable, inexpressible tenderness for you which is sealed up within my own.

Oh, Adèle, when I think that it might have been that you did not love me, I shudder as though I stood on the brink of an abyss. Alas! what would have become of me, great Heaven! if this angel's regard had not deigned to bestow itself on me? My life would, indeed, have been mocked at by heaven; for, my adored Adèle, would it not have been unjust to allow me to seek the soul destined for my soul with truth and purity, and yet not permit me to find it?

I have done nothing that makes me unworthy of you; but what, again, can I have done that deserves you? Nothing, alas, but love you, with an ardent,

pure, and innocent love, and devote to you till death, and after death, my whole being, my mortal and immortal existence. What is all that, dear love, beside the happiness of possessing you?

Adieu; I shall see you this evening. Shall I have a letter from you? I embrace you as a husband, who is most impatient to be a husband.

FRIDAY, *October 4th.*

When I reflect, my Adèle, that our happiness is so near, and that henceforward nothing can hinder it, my life seems to me like a dream. During two years—during one year—I was miserable! To-day, what happiness! Sometimes I can hardly realize that I have at length escaped from that long, painful period when my only joys, my only pleasures, were a passing glance from you, a glimpse of your dress perceived from afar off in the street or on the promenade, and, a little later, one or two words exchanged with timidity during a few brief moments' conversation. Even these for a long time, were closely watched, and rarely to be obtained.

What joy! All this is in the past, and there is nothing but delight in our future. Nothing can separate us any longer, Adèle; nothing can now constrain our interviews, our caresses, our love! I repeat that I can hardly believe in this happiness, because it seems to me that I have, even yet, done so little to deserve so much! The joy in my soul is in the same condition as my love—that is to say, expression fails me to-day for the one as it has always failed me for the other. All words for passion and devotion have

been so extravagantly used that they are enfeebled by force of being made common, and what I myself experience is an emotion of happiness so pure, so sacred, so profound, that it resembles nothing that voioe or pen is adequate to express. Ask your own soul, Adèle, my dearest, and if it is true that you love me, then it will tell you all that mine is unable to present in material form.

Our history, dear love, will afford one more proof of the truth, *vouloir fermement, c'est pouvoir.* A few months have sufficed to overcome a great many obstacles; but what is not possible to him who loves you, and who knows himself to be beloved by you?

Adieu, my adored Adèle; your thrice-happy husband embraces you; he is impatient to know how you have passed the night, and if you are in health at this moment. Once more, adieu.

The marriage of Victor and Adèle took place on the 12th of October, 1822, two years and a half from the day when, on April 26, 1819, they had confessed their love.

THE END







